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VOICES OF OCTOBER



We Want Good Crops (*Kostiznitzin*)



VOICES OF OCTOBER

*Art and Literature in
Soviet Russia*

by

JOSEPH FREEMAN

JOSHUA KUNITZ

LOUIS LOZOWICK



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P R E F A C E

SINCE ideas lag behind events, it is not surprising that long after the western countries lifted the economic and political blockade against the Soviet Union there should have continued a kind of intellectual blockade obscuring the cultural achievements of the Revolution. In this respect the United States has been slower than certain European countries, notably Germany, which, for a number of years, has been translating Soviet novelists and poets and showing Soviet films. We have begun to do so only in the past few years. In 1927, for example, ten years after the October Revolution, there existed a paradoxical situation: on the one hand, we had many books describing in great detail the political, economic and social achievements of the Soviet Union; on the other hand, only a few isolated books touching on Soviet literature, painting, the theatre and the cinema. Consequently it is possible even today for reputable journals to publish statements about Soviet art which they would dismiss as infantile if made about Soviet politics or economics. As late as last year, twelve years after the Revolution, a liberal New York weekly published an article mourning the "tragedy of modern Russian literature," whose themes are "limited by a narrow, official Communist outlook"; a literature whose writers must "forgo all individual or psychological problems" because they are "denied the freedom of art"; where "lyricism is taboo" and the development of talent is "either totally checked or at least arrested."

Such statements are still published despite the appearance in English of Trotzky's remarkable *Literature and Revolution* and studies of the Soviet theatre by Hallie Flannagan and Huntly Carter.

The past two years, however, have witnessed in this country a growing interest in Soviet art and literature, due to some direct acquaintance with certain of its achievements. This is primarily true of the cinema, which until 1928 was represented by three or four films, but since then has been represented by over forty. In the past two years we have also had translations from the works of Alexei Tolstoi, Piniak, Maiakovsky, Neverov, Kollontay, Ogniev, Gladkov and Ilya Ehrenburg. On the other hand, Soviet painting is hardly known here; one or two compositions by Soviet musical composers have been played in New York; and the Soviet theatre has been represented by only one play, *Red Rust*.

The increasing attention paid to Soviet literature and the cinema, and the meagre attention paid to the other Soviet arts, has suggested the need of a general outline of art and literature in the Soviet Union which should attempt to indicate the rôle they play in Soviet life and the cultural revolution of which each art is an integral factor. This book is such an attempt. It pretends to be neither an exhaustive nor a detailed study, but merely a preliminary sketch, which, for lack of any similar survey of the field, outlines the leading tendencies in Soviet literature, the theatre, the cinema, painting and music. The bulk of the study is devoted to literature because it is easier, in a book, to translate poets and novelists than to give an equally direct impression of films or symphonies. The sections on literature seek neither to praise nor to condemn, neither to denounce nor to apologize, but merely to collect, collate, and interpret the more

significant literary documents produced in Soviet Russia since the Revolution of 1917. Wherever possible, the Soviet writers and the heroes of Soviet fiction are allowed to speak for themselves, so that the reader may have as direct an acquaintance with them as is possible in such a study. The aim has been, in these sections, as well as in the sections on the other arts, not so much to interpret Soviet Russia as to let Soviet Russia interpret itself. The aim throughout has been to contribute in this country toward a keener appreciation and more vital synthesis of the numerous and often conflicting psychological and social forces that enter into the making of the entire complex of Soviet life at present. The material offered in this outline will, it is hoped, be of some value as a complement to the historical, sociological and economic studies of Soviet Russia already published here. Surely no one interested in the contemporary world can afford to overlook the highly suggestive material to be found in the rich and multicolored art and literature of the Soviet Union.

JOSEPH FREEMAN

New York City
January, 1930

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VOICES OF OCTOBER

CHAPTER I

PAST AND PRESENT

By Joseph Freeman


THE ROOTS OF SOVIET LITERATURE

Soviet literature has its roots not only in the life created by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, but also in certain literary traditions developed in Russia prior to the Revolution. If the poems and novels of Soviet writers appear to be unusually propagandistic and political, it must be remembered that Russian literature has been predominantly propagandistic and political for more than a century. Literature was the product of the intelligentsia, and the absolutist nature of the Russian empire barred the mass of people, the intelligentsia included, from direct participation in political life. The press was rigorously censored; open discussion of social questions was difficult and dangerous. Social struggles were carried on clandestinely. As a result, what could not be said directly was said indirectly; the Russian intellectual, whether of the nobility or of the middle class of the first half of the nineteenth century and, later, of the working class, voiced in fiction what he could not voice in outspoken editorials. This circumstance made Russian literature throughout the nineteenth century more than mere entertainment: it gave Russian fiction a depth which can come only from the most intimate connection with actual social struggles. Such direct contact

many of the great Russian writers had; they participated in the illegal political activities to which Czarism drove the oppressed classes of the empire. Some of the most important names in Russian literature will be found among those political "criminals" imprisoned or exiled for combatting Czarism. Radischev, Pushkin, Lermontov, Chernishevski, Herzen, Pisarev, and, in his youth, even Dostoievski, were exiled for their political utterances and activities, and it was only the high social position and world-wide fame of Tolstoi which saved him from a similar fate.

LENIN ON GORKI AND DOSTOIEVSKI

This acute social consciousness of the Russian writer gave Russian fiction the seriousness of political utterances, and no group discussed books more thoughtfully than those revolutionaries who later became known as Communists. Thus the tendencies of contemporary Soviet literature become clearer if we examine the Communists' approach to certain pre-revolutionary classics.



During the first two decades of this century, Maxim Gorki was actively connected with the Bolshevik group; he was a close friend of Lenin's and wrote regularly for the Bolshevik press. In 1913 he published a protest against the Moscow Art Theatre's production of Dostoievski's *The Possessed*. This play was a dramatized version of the anti-revolutionary novel in which Dostoievski caricatured revolutionists and urged the search for God. Gorki attacked the play as "esthetically dubious" and "socially harmful." His protest threw the liberal and reactionary press into a terrific turmoil. They published a number of articles in defense of Dostoievski, to which Gorki replied with a second article. The discus-

sion revolved more and more not about what was "esthetically dubious" but about what was "socially harmful." The essential point became Dostoievski's "God-seeking"; the literary question became the social question of the rôle of religion in modern society. Gorki, representing what he thought was the revolutionary viewpoint, declared that "Gods are not sought; they are created." At this point Lenin entered the literary controversy. Though he had a deep attachment for Gorki as the exponent of a rising proletarian literature, Lenin wrote him a sharp letter in which he went straight to the heart of the problem which Dostoievski had raised.

"You are against God-seeking," Lenin wrote to Gorki, "only because you wish to replace it by God-making. . . . God-seeking is different from God-making or God-producing no more than a yellow devil is different from a blue devil. . . . God-making—isn't that the vilest form of self-contempt? Everyone who spends his time creating God, or even merely permits such creations, demeans himself in the vilest way, for he devotes his energies not to action but to self-contemplation and self-reflection; such a person lovingly 'contemplates' the most unsavory, the most stupid, the most slavish aspects—even the smallest of these creatures—of his 'ego,' which he seeks to deify by his God-making. From the social point of view, not from the personal, all God-making is nothing but the smug self-contemplation of the stupid petit bourgeois, the brittle philistine, the dreamy, self-deprecating little bourgeois who is 'desperate and tired.' "

LENIN ON TOLSTOI

Tolstoi, like Dostoievski, also presented a problem that was more than esthetic. He raised profound social and

political questions, and it was these that the Russian intellectuals debated. The Bolsheviks, whose outlook dominates contemporary Russian literature, did not confuse the esthetic and social elements in Tolstoi's novels.

"We do not deny," Lenin said, "and do not intend to deny, Tolstoi's artistic endowments. We cannot throw overboard all the valuable aspects of Tolstoi, a genuine artist who has given us not only incomparable pictures of Russian life, but also works of the highest type in world literature." But Tolstoi was more than a mere spinner of yarns; he was the voice of a social class; he was the novelist of the agrarian nobility. As such, he bore a definite relation to the workers' and peasants' Revolution which was gathering momentum. Lenin wanted the workers to ask themselves: What causes all this excitement about Tolstoi? What "weakness of our Revolution does it express?" Lenin insisted that Tolstoi did not understand the proletarian movement; that the Revolution was strange to him; Tolstoi was using all the power of his artistic genius, all his great influence to prove the futility and sinfulness of revolution; Tolstoi was trying to convince the masses that they must renounce the class struggle and avoid all forceful resistance to evil. Tolstoi's ideas, said Lenin, "are a mirror of the weaknesses and faults of our peasant rebellion; a reflection of the cowardice of a little homely peasant." Tolstoi, he said, was not only an opponent of science and a God-seeker but also the voice of the decaying landed aristocracy, fearing on the one hand the peasant Revolution and on the other the growing bourgeoisie. It was the latter fear which impelled Tolstoi to attack certain aspects of the autocracy and of Capitalism; hence, while attacking Tolstoi's reactionary social philosophy, Lenin

urged the Bolsheviks to acquaint the workers with Tolstoi's attacks on capitalist exploitation; with Tolstoi's desire to "do away with the public church, the landowners and their rule," to annihilate "all old forms and orders of feudal domination; to clear the land and create instead of the police-class government, a commune of free and equal peasants." The Bolsheviks would show, Lenin added, that Tolstoi "reflected a painful hatred, which matured into a striving for something better, a desire to get rid of the past, the immaturity of his dreams, his lack of political discipline." To Lenin the death of Tolstoi in 1909 signified that "pre-revolutionary Russia, with its lack of energy and strength, expressed in the philosophy of a genuine artist, has receded into the past."

THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY INTELLIGENTSIA

This "lack of energy and strength" was characteristic of the pre-revolutionary Russian intelligentsia. The intelligentsia was not, of course, a unified homogeneous class; it was divided along lines essentially determined by the basic social classes in czarist Russia. The landed aristocracy, the priests, the officials, the peasants, and the industrial workers all had their representatives in the intelligentsia and in the literature which they produced. From Lenin's views on Tolstoi and Dostoievski it may be seen that the Bolsheviks, representing the industrial proletariat, embodied the principle of *action* as opposed to the passivity of the typical Russian intellectual. This type has been excellently described by Mossaye Olgin in his book *The Soul of the Russian Revolution*. The Russian intellectual, according to Olgin, was primarily a bookman, more interested in theory than in real life; he substituted discussion for action; he had a passion for

the newest ideas. Barred from action by the czarist autocracy, he looked longingly toward Western Europe, eagerly adopting its current ideas. Unable to test these ideas in action, he accepted not those which were most practical but those which were most "advanced." This frustration in the world of action drove the Russian intellectual into introspection, self-analysis, and self-accusation. Some intellectuals, born in the nobility or the bourgeoisie, left their own social classes and joined the people. Moved by a profound and mystical reverence for the masses, particularly the peasants, they went "among the people" in a spirit of self-sacrifice.

The "advanced" ideas which animated the intellectuals found their expression in Russian fiction, poetry, drama, music and painting. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Russian literature was the battlefield on which the Slavophiles and the Westerners fought out their differences; in the second half, one of the main battles was between the *Narodniks* (Populists), who looked on industrialism as a foreign growth incompatible with the foundations of Russian economic life, and the Marxists, who accepted industrialism and the class struggle and agitated for the dictatorship of the proletariat as the next step toward Communism.

The soft and dreamy qualities of the Russian bourgeois intellectual are familiar to us from the Russian classics. The man incapable of action has been described not only in Goncharov's *Oblomov* but in numerous creations of Turgenev, Dostoevski, Chekov, Andreyev and others. In addition to this type, Russian literature also developed the satirical figure of the ignorant, stubborn, conceited, yet successful, administrator prevalent under Czarism. Portraits of this type may be found in Maxim Gorki's *The Last*, Leonid Andreyev's *The Governor*, and


in the satires of Saltikov-Schedrin. At the same time a number of writers were describing the life of the Russian peasant. The works of Gleb Uspenski are a kind of *Main Street*, harping on the monotony of rural life. Writing of the Caspian Sea, Uspenski exclaims:

"It's the same 'all the way through' from here to Archangel, from Archangel to Odessa, from Odessa to Kamchatka, from Kamchatka to Vladikavkaz and further to the Persian, to the Turkish frontier . . . 'all the way through' everything is the same, as if coined by the same machine: the same fields, the same corn-ears, the same earth, the same sky, the same *Muzhiks*, the same peasant women, all of the same kind, all the same brand, the same colors, thoughts, clothes, the same songs." This, of course, is an extremely subjective picture, for there is as much in common between the thoughts and clothes and songs of a Crimean Tartar and an Archangel native as between a Methodist minister in Kansas and a gaucho in the Argentine. But Uspenski's complaint shows with what moody and restless eyes the intelligentsia looked upon the world around it. Nevertheless, Uspenski's sketches of Russian country life, with their portraits of lazy land-owners and grey peasants, are among the most realistic products of Russian literature.

These descriptions of the Russian scene were written by members of the upper and middle classes. Yet the workers and peasants had their own writers who expressed the social struggle from the point of view of their respective classes, and writers of middle-class origin who gravitated toward the workers or peasants. Of these Maxim Gorki is the best known; but as already suggested, there were others. A. Serafimovitch, who today is one of the outstanding Russian writers presenting

the proletarian attitude, was publishing novels and stories of worker and peasant life long before the World War. One of his best pre-war stories, *At Midnight*, describes a meeting of workers and peasants, at which the workers explain to the peasants the need for improving their lives. The meeting ends with the peasants shouting for land. Eugene Chirikov's play *Muzbiks*, published in 1905, vividly depicts the conflict between the peasants and the landowners, the peasants' terrible poverty and their need for land, and the utter helplessness of the landowners. The play ends in an uprising, foreshadowing on a small scale the epic revolt of the peasantry twelve years later. *The Burning Forest* by M. Skitaletz expresses the same cry of the peasant for land. There were hundreds of such stories and through all of them there surged the revolutionary energy emanating from the Russian people gathering their forces to overthrow Czarism. "It is like a house on fire," one old working woman in Gorki's *Mother* says about the revolutionary movement. "One flame joins another flame and all rise high. It bursts through here, it sparkles there, ever brighter, ever stronger."

The fire became a general conflagration in 1905, when the people made the first attempt to overthrow Czarism. The collapse of this Revolution terrified the Russian intelligentsia; many of those who had "gone to the people" and joined the revolutionary movement now fled back to the bourgeoisie. The literature of this period reflects the bankruptcy of the intelligentsia. It was permeated with decadence, pessimism, and despair. This was the period of Kuprin's and Artzibashev's erotic novels, Merezhkovski's mysticism, and Andreyev's self-torture. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that many of the liberal intellectuals became out-and-out chauvinists dur-



ing the World War; from disappointment in the 1905 revolution they had degenerated into supporting imperialism.

In his book *Literature and Revolution*, Trotzky thus summarizes the social aspects of Russian literature throughout the nineteenth century down to the Revolution: "Our old literature and 'culture' were the expressions of the nobleman and the bureaucrat, and were based on the peasant. The nobleman who did not doubt himself, as well as the 'repentant' nobleman, laid their imprints upon the most significant period of Russian literature. Later the intellectual-commoner arose, and he too wrote his chapter into the history of Russian literature. After going through a period of fullest simplification (of leading the simple life of the people), the intellectual commoner became modernized, differentiated and individualized, in the bourgeois sense of the term. Here lies the rôle of the Decadent and Symbolist schools. Already at the beginning of the century, but especially after 1907-1908, the rebirth of the bourgeois intelligentsia and its literature proceeds at full speed. The War made this process end patriotically."

The World War halted the development of Russian literature. What little was produced was the work of war correspondents. The bourgeois revolution of February, 1917, was equally sterile. It was not until the Bolshevik Revolution of October, 1917 (November according to the new calendar), that Russian literature entered a new great period of development. A vigorous art developed out of the new social structure. The workers and peasants of Russia, abolishing Czarism and Capitalism, established their own government and their own form of social organization; it was they who now published the newspapers and books, listened to concerts,

enjoyed paintings, and read fiction and poetry. This new audience demanded new literary themes and new types of writers.

The development of the Russian arts following the October Revolution will be described elsewhere in this book. Here we may note that writers of the old intelligentsia like Bunin, Merezhkovski, Kuprin, Balmont, Chirikov, Zinaida Hippus, Aldanov and many others, fled from Russia, hurling impotent curses at the Revolution. These were literary counterparts of political members of the intelligentsia—"liberals," Constitutional Democrats, Social Revolutionists, and Mensheviks—who were "disappointed" and "horrified" by the course of the October Revolution.

However, not all of the pre-revolutionary intellectuals opposed the dictatorship of the proletariat. Not only were there many Communist leaders of bourgeois origin, but for various reasons, certain non-Communist poets hailed the Revolution sympathetically though without quite understanding it. The Symbolist poet, Alexander Blok, paid tribute to it in works like *The Twelve* and *The Scythians*. He was joined by other Symbolist writers, notably Biely and Voloshin. But the writers of the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia who greeted the Revolution most enthusiastically were the Futurists. These have played so important a rôle in the development of Soviet literature that a few words must be said about their origin.

THE FUTURISTS

Russian Futurism has little in common with the Italian school of the same name; it is almost a purely indigenous outgrowth of Russian literature. The great-

est contributions were made to poetry. The Futurists transformed and revolutionized metrical forms, and discovered new possibilities in Russian words and Russian rhythms. Against the concept of Symbolists like Blok and Biely that poetry was essentially mystical and the poet a priest and seer, the Futurists urged the conception of the poet as workman and artisan. The pioneers of the Russian Futurist school were Victor Khlebnikov and Boris Pasternak. Shortly before the outbreak of the World War, the Futurists adopted a hostile attitude toward the ruling classes. Their slogan was *épater la bourgeoisie*; they indulged in unconventional mannerisms, painting pictures on their faces and flaunting yellow shirts. Nevertheless, the Futurists were the most promising literary group in Russia by the time the Revolution occurred; being unrecognized by the old régime, it seemed, at first, as if they most naturally fitted into the new.

While Futurism represented the rebellious attitude of the bohemian intelligentsia, there were other writers reflecting the attitude of the revolutionary working class. In 1913, for example, R. Grigoriev published a story called *Fading Away*, dealing with the demoralization of many workers following the apparent defeat of the Revolution in 1905. The hero of the story is killed; many forsake the revolutionary cause; but the story ends significantly. A woman intellectual, once connected with the revolutionary movement, is at a concert given for the benefit of a workers' organization. She meets a rank-and-file member of that organization and they talk about the Revolution. "Why recollect the past?" she says. "Aren't we all beaten? What is the use of talking?" But the worker replies: "Oh, no! You are mistaken, comrade. *We* are not beaten at all. *You*

went away from us; we, however, continued growing. During those difficult years a new intellectual force has risen among us. We are going to have our own proletarian leaders. Don't you feel that the worst times are over? What a youth has sprung up among the working people!" Four years after this story was published the working people destroyed the old order and established the first workers' and peasants' republic in history.

THE SOCIAL BASIS OF ART

The organization which acted as the advance guard of the Russian workers and peasants in establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat and founding the Soviet Republic was the Communist Party. The doctrines of this Party constitute the prevailing philosophy of the Soviet Union today. It is impossible to understand contemporary Russian art and literature without reference to these doctrines, for the Communist Party has not only transformed institutions, customs and manners, but has filled Russian speech with new concepts and phrases. The very language of Russian literature has been changed by the Revolution; even spelling has been simplified by the dropping of obsolete and useless letters. Only in the light of Communist theories and purposes is it possible to understand conflicting esthetic schools, methods of criticism, or the themes of novels, plays and poems in the Soviet Union. The philosophy of the Communists, as outlined by Marx, Engels, Lenin and other working-class thinkers; their analysis of Capitalism, the exploitation of workers, the causes of poverty and war, the class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the evolution of humanity through the class struggle to Communism, may be found in an extensive literature

which touches on every aspect of human life and is indispensable to anyone who wishes truly to understand not only the Soviet Union but contemporary events in general.

In the cultural field, the Communists proceed on the conviction that the struggle of economic classes determines not only the nature of political and social institutions, but also philosophy, literature and art. They reject the notion that art is something "divine," unrelated to political, economic and social struggles. Art, they say, is merely one aspect of culture, which includes all the activities of a society. In the final analysis, it has its roots in the social structure of a given period, in its technique, in its class relations. The Communist viewpoint on the relationship between art and society was first formulated by Marx in his *Critique of Political Economy* as follows:

It is well known that certain periods of the highest development of art stand in no direct connection with the general development of society, nor with the material basis and the skeleton structure of its organization. Witness the example of the Greeks as compared with the modern nations or even Shakespeare. As regards certain forms of art, for example the epic, it is admitted that they can never be produced in the world-epoch-making form as soon as art as such comes into existence; in other words, that in the domain of art certain important forms of it are possible only at a low stage of its development. If that be true of the mutual relations of different forms of art within the domain of art itself, it is far less surprising that the same is true of the relation of art as a whole to the general development of society. The difficulty lies only in the general formulation of these contradictions. No sooner are they specified than they are explained. Let us take the relation of Greek art and that of Shakespeare's time to our own as an example. It is well

known that Greek mythology was not only the arsenal of Greek art, but also the very ground from which it had sprung. Is the view of nature and of social relations which shaped Greek imagination and Greek art possible in the age of automatic machinery, and railways, and locomotives and electric telegraphs? Where does Vulcan come in against Roberts and Company, Jupiter as against the lightning rod, or Hermes as against the *Crédit Mobilier*? All mythology masters and dominates and shapes the forces of nature in and through the imagination; hence it disappears as soon as man gains mastery over the forces of nature. What becomes of the Goddess Fame side by side with Printing House Square? Greek art presupposes the existence of Greek mythology; *i.e.*, that nature and even the form of society are wrought up in popular fancy in an unconsciously artistic fashion. That is its material. Not, however, any mythology taken at random, nor any accidental unconsciously artistic elaboration of nature (including under the latter all objects, hence also society). Egyptian mythology could never be the soil or womb which would give birth to Greek art. But in any event there had to be *a* mythology. In no event could Greek art originate in a society which excludes any mythological explanation of nature, any mythological attitude toward it and which requires from the artist an imagination free from mythology. Looking at it from another side: is Achilles possible side by side with powder and lead? or is the *Illiad* at all comparable with the printing press and the steam press? Does not singing and reciting and the muses necessarily go out of existence with the appearance of the printer's bar, and do not, therefore, disappear the prerequisites of epic poetry? ¹

These observations may appear self-evident now; but they were written in 1857, when European and American poets were resisting the coming of the machine age by retiring into an imaginary world where Greek myth-

¹ Marx, *Critique of Political Economy*, Kerr.

ology was still assumed to be true; half a century later (in 1912) when the Italian Futurists and the American Moderns "discovered" the machine, they were considered "wild" revolutionaries in art, who had to wage a violent battle against the conservatives—until their theses in turn became commonplace.

ART AND CLASS

The Communists not only deny that art is something apart from the social structure; they further deny that artists are "above the battle." All art, they say, is *class* art; and every artist is a participant in the class struggle. The "absolute freedom" of the artist, they maintain, is an illusion. In his essay on *Party Organisation and Party Literature*, Lenin addressed the exponents of "art for art's sake" as follows:

We must tell you, bourgeois individualist gentlemen, that your chatter about "absolute freedom" is sheer hypocrisy. In a society based on the dictatorship of money, in a society where the masses of workers suffer while little groups of wealthy idlers loaf, there can be no real "freedom." Are you free from your bourgeois publisher, Mr. Author? Or are you free from your bourgeois audience which demands pornography from you, which insists that you give them prostitution as a supplement to the "sacred" art of the drama. "Absolute freedom" is a bourgeois or anarchist illusion (for anarchism as a philosophy is an inverted bourgeois philosophy). One cannot live in a society and be free from that society. The independence of the bourgeois author, artist and actress is merely a pretended independence from the money-bag, from bribery, from being kept. We Communists expose this hypocrisy; we rip off the false front; but not in order to achieve a classless literature and art (that will be possible only in a Communist classless society). We do this in order to oppose

to the seemingly free but actually bourgeois-bound literature a really free literature which is *openly* bound up with the proletariat. That will be a really free literature because not profits or ambition but the idea of Communism and sympathy for the workers will constantly recruit for it more and more forces. That will be a free literature because it will serve not the blasé heroine, not the overfed and bored upper ten thousand, but millions and millions of workers, representing the flower of the country, its strength and its future.

THE SOCIALIZATION OF ART

This attitude of the Communist Party has established the basis on which Soviet art and literature must develop. No contemporary Russian artist can afford to be socially unconscious; no artist can justify his work in the opinion of the revolutionary proletariat unless it is to some extent in harmony with the proletariats' fundamental aims—which include not only the socialization of economic production and distribution but of cultural production and distribution as well. The Communist philosophy is essentially active and practical. "Hitherto," Marx declared, "philosophers have tried to explain the world; but what is important is to *change* it." The world is being changed by the class struggle which leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, and this dictatorship, in laying the foundations for a Communist classless society, makes culture accessible to the mass of workers and peasants. "Culture for the wealthy—spiritual debasement for the poor—that is the method of Capitalism," declared the 1918 program of the Russian Communist Party. "Culture for all, spiritual deliverance from the yoke of capital—that is the watchword of the part of the working class—the Communists." *The ABC of*

Communism,² written by two prominent participants in the October Revolution, elaborates this idea, asserting that:

Under Capitalism, talent is looked upon as the private property of its immediate possessor and is regarded as a means of enrichment. A work of genius, a thing with infinite social significance, and one whose essential nature is that of a collective creation, can be purchased by a Russian named Kolupayeff or an American named Morgan, and the buyer is then entitled to change or to destroy it as fancy dictates. . . . As a result of the private purchase and sale of works of art, rare books, manuscripts, etc., many of them are rendered inaccessible to the broad masses of the people, and these rarities become the exclusive possessions of members of the exploiting class. The Soviet Republic has declared all works of art, collections, etc., to be social property, and it removes every obstacle to their social utilization. . . . By degrees therefore all the works of science and art, which were created in the first instance by the exploitation of the toiling masses—were a burden upon their backs, were produced at their cost—have now been restored to their rightful owners.

Such are the ideas that permeate the cultural activities of the Soviet régime. One of the first acts of the Soviet government was to nationalize art museums and art collections of various kinds and to make them accessible to the masses of people. On week-ends and holidays groups of workers and peasants may be seen crowding these museums, accompanied by guides to explain the various exhibits.

² *The ABC of Communism*, by N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhenski, International Publishers,

THE AIM OF SOVIET ART

The Soviet authorities believe that Communism, which is their ultimate goal, can be realized only through the widest cultural and political education. They do not divide various cultural fields into unrelated units. Art and literature are considered as aspects of a culture which includes everything from agriculture to music, from bathing to astronomy, from railways to painting. For this reason, all artistic and literary activity is under the direct supervision of the Commissariat of Education, which is responsible to the central authority of the Soviet Government, which in turn is responsible to the Communist Party.

The aim of Soviet cultural activities, art and literature included, is primarily to raise the cultural level of the entire population, and to create the foundations of a Communist culture, as opposed to Capitalist culture. Every teacher, journalist, scientist, poet, playwright, and movie director must contribute to these great aims; every novel, poem and play can justify itself in the eyes of the Russian workers, only if its author can demonstrate that it fits into the general cultural aims of the Soviet Union. There are many artistic and literary groups in the country with conflicting points of view and divergent esthetics, but their arguments always simmer down to the essential question: Which form of art or which esthetic program best serves the proletariat in establishing a Communist society? Only if this central characteristic of Soviet culture as a whole is constantly borne in mind is it possible to understand the numerous movements and groups in Soviet poetry, fiction, drama, and cinema.

The coördination of all cultural activities has led to

a unique phenomenon. The Soviet Union is perhaps the only country in the world today where the ruling political party and its outstanding leaders have taken an active part in the sharp literary and artistic controversies of the country. In the midst of the most pressing economic and political problems, political leaders like Lenin, Bukharin, Trotzky, Radek, and Lunacharski actively and decisively participated in the solution of fundamental cultural problems. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is perhaps the only political party in the world today which has adopted a comprehensive resolution outlining its policy on art and literature.

This resolution, dealt with elsewhere in this book, is typical of the Communist cultural program in that, under the heading of literature, it deals not only with novels and poems but also with the abolition of illiteracy and the development of worker and peasant correspondents. It is the policy of the Soviet government not merely to encourage and assist *belles lettres*, but also to make the elements of literature and art accessible to the mass of the population. For this, naturally, literacy is indispensable. A census taken in the Soviet Union in 1920 showed that Czarism had left a population of more than 140,000,000 people of whom about seventy percent could neither read nor write. The Soviet government, therefore, undertook the task of abolishing illiteracy.

SOVIET PUBLISHING

An important aspect of the popularization of culture among the masses of the Soviet Union is the wide distribution of books. Pre-revolutionary publishing reached its high-water mark in 1912 with 34,600 titles and 133,500,000 copies and a turnover of between forty

and fifty million rubles. In 1928 there were in the Soviet Union 2,000 publishing enterprises with an output of 27,700 titles and 212,000,000 copies and a turnover of more than seventy million rubles. Prior to the Revolution, the average circulation of a book was 4,000.

More important than these figures is the quality of Soviet books as compared with pre-revolutionary books. The cheap "popular" concoctions of czarist days have been replaced by truly popular scientific, literary and political books. The form and appearance of books have also improved. During the first ten years of the Revolution the Soviet Union published a total of 115,500 titles and about one hundred million copies.

The leading publishing establishment of the Soviet Union is the State Publishing House, generally referred to by its initials as GIZ or GOSIZDAT. This government institution has so far published about 18,000 titles and 365,000,000 copies, in addition to about 2,000 periodicals. It has spent over 170,000,000 rubles on its own and other publications, both for sale and for free distribution. From its establishment in 1922 until 1927 GOSIZDAT's turnover has been about 133,500,000 rubles. It publishes more than fifty-five percent of the books in the Soviet Union, and has at its disposal the best printing presses and the most widespread commercial network in the country. The evolution of GOSIZDAT's output is typical of the changes in Soviet literature from 1917 until the present. During the civil war period, its main output was the aggressive propaganda pamphlet. During the years of reconstruction, however, it specialized in serious books on politics, economics, education, and the various sciences. With the growth of the workers' and peasants' cultural demands, GOSIZDAT has increased its output of *belles lettres* and children's books.

Other important publishing houses in the Soviet Union are the *Moscow Worker*, the *Educational Worker*, *Land and Factory*, the *State Medical Publishing House*, the *New Village*, the Ukrainian GOSIZDAT, and the *Proletariat*. The center of Soviet publishing is in Moscow, but there also are important publishing houses in Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa, Rostov and Tiflis. Workers for the publishing enterprises are trained in special courses given by the leading publishing houses and in a special high school established for this purpose.

The Soviet publishing houses have issued large editions of the Socialist classics like Marx, Lenin, Engels, Mehring, Jaurès, Kautski, Clara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht; and have also republished in cheap editions Russian classics like Pushkin, Gogol, Uspenski, Chekov, and Turgenev. The State Publishing House has issued, for example, the first complete edition of Tolstoi's works and the first complete edition of Alexander Herzen's works. Both editions include many manuscripts previously suppressed by the Czarist censor.

Cheap editions have made literature accessible to the workers and peasants. Especially striking is the growth of book distribution in the villages. The peasants, who before the revolution were kept in such ignorance that they were known the world over as the "dark people," now have in their villages not only schools to counteract the formerly widespread illiteracy but also book distribution centers which have sprung up within the past seven or eight years. Book distribution in the village is under the supervision chiefly of the coöperatives through their central body, the *Zentrosoyuz*, and an organization known as "The Book in the Village." The latter organization alone by September, 1925, had established more than 1,600 book stalls in the villages.

By February, 1927, the number of book stalls had risen to 4,600, and one month later it was already 6,300; while *Zentrosoyuz* had established by May, 1927, a total of more than 4,000 book shops.

THE PRESS

The Soviet press plays an enormous rôle in the campaign to socialize culture. Here again the Bolsheviks reject the pretense of an impartial press. The bourgeois press, they maintain, is one of the cultural and political weapons of the capitalist class; and the proletarian press must be a cultural and political weapon of the working class. "We must begin," Lenin wrote as far back as 1901, "with the creation of a big Russian political newspaper; for the rôle of the newspaper is not confined to the dissemination of ideas, to political education and to attracting political allies; the newspaper not only carries on collective propaganda and collective agitation—but also *collective organization*."³ Newspapers and writing in general must be under party control. "The socialist proletariat," Lenin wrote in 1905, "must establish the principle of party literature; it must develop this literature and realize it in actual life in the clearest and most concrete form. . . . Down with non-partisan writers! Down with the supermen-litterateurs! Literature must become a part of the general proletarian movement, a cog in that vast unified Socialist mechanism which is set in motion by the conscious advance guard of the entire working class. Literature must become a component part of the organized, planned, unified Socialist party work."

³ *The Iskra Period*, Vol. IV of *Lenin's Collected Words*, International Publishers.

The organization and operation of the Soviet press is a study in itself; but from the standpoint of the popularization of culture it is important to mention in passing two unique Communist institutions: the worker-peasant correspondent and the wall newspaper, both of which permit the masses of the population to voice their thoughts in the most direct manner.

The worker correspondent (the Russian abbreviation is *rabkor*) and the peasant correspondent (*selkor*) are Bolshevik developments. Following the collapse of the 1905 Revolution, the Bolshevik group began toward 1907 to publish a legal press, into which they drew thousands of class-conscious workers as correspondents. These were asked to write about their lives, their struggles, their political experiences, their economic difficulties.

"We ask everybody," Lenin said in 1904, "to write us, especially the workers. Give the workers a greater possibility of writing to our paper—to write about everything, as much as possible about their daily life, their interests, their work."

After the October Revolution the worker and peasant correspondents became one of the Soviet government's direct links with the masses. Thousands of worker and peasant correspondents, now organized in special groups, inform the press every day about events in factory, office and farm. Such volunteer correspondents sometimes find their jobs dangerous; there have been periods when the rich peasants killed peasant correspondents who reported to the press tax violations or grain hoarding. The Soviet régime looks upon the worker and peasant correspondents as part of the mechanism by which the workers and peasants control the life of the country, act as a check on bureaucracy, and voice their complaints,

needs, achievements and aspirations. It also considers them rich soil for cultural development, since they create a conscious and alert audience and keep the Soviet writers acutely aware of the real life around them.

In 1924 the Thirteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union adopted a resolution to extend the movement for worker and peasant correspondents in every way, making it easier for them to be the "barometer of daily life." Since then the movement has grown rapidly, rising from about 25,000 peasant correspondents in 1924, to 161,000 in 1926. In that year the total of worker and peasant correspondents combined was more than 250,000. Thus the average Soviet newspaper had in 1925 about 122 worker correspondents and 190 peasant correspondents. The majority of these volunteer correspondents are not members of the Communist Party; the worker correspondents are fifty percent non-Party and the peasant correspondents seventy-five percent. It is also noteworthy that most of the worker and peasant correspondents are young men between twenty and thirty years of age.

A total of 250,000 correspondents scattered through a population of more than 140,000,000 may not seem very large; but the worker and peasant correspondents are incredibly attentive and energetic. Thus a single Moscow newspaper, the *Moskovskaya Krestyanskaya Gazetta*, reports that in the two years between 1924 and 1926 it received more than 470,000 communications from worker and peasant correspondents. It must also be kept in mind that these communications are not mere reports of facts; they are always filled with social criticism, with approval or disapproval, complaints and suggestions on matters of vital interest to everybody. Not all of these communications are published. Some-

times they start government investigations of law violations or counter-revolutionary acts.

WALL NEWSPAPERS

Wall newspapers, like worker and peasant correspondents, are found everywhere in the Soviet Union—in villages, factories, barracks, offices, schools and kindergartens. The brief paragraphs, reports, editorials, poems and sketches, and the gay cartoons which make up the wall newspapers are written by the workers and peasants themselves. While the regular press deals with matters of general interest, the wall newspaper specializes in matters of local concern in the institution where it is put out. In its columns the workers complain if the factory management fails to fix the shower baths or the clothes closets, and the peasant voices his praise or blame of officials and agricultural experts. It may be difficult for the worker or peasant to write—perhaps he is still in the last stages of the school for the abolition of illiteracy—but that does not matter. He is encouraged by the caption on the wall newspaper which says: "Comrades! Write for the wall newspaper! The editorial committee will correct your mistakes! Write about your life, about your achievements and your complaints!"

The first wall newspapers appeared in the Red Army barracks at the battlefront in 1920. They did not reach the villages until 1922. Demobilized Red Army soldiers, returning to the farms from which they came, rural school teachers, and industrial workers on vacation introduced the wall newspaper into the village; others into the city factories and offices.

Contributions to the wall newspaper must, necessarily,

be brief. Thus a worker in a Moscow textile factory condenses the idea of coöperatives in a paragraph:

"The working woman spends a great deal of energy on her family and household duties. She comes home and must cook. All this after eight hours' work at the factory and often after work in social organizations. Women must take an active part in the improvement of this condition because she is most concerned in it. Worker! Do you know that the coöperatives donate part of their profits to the fund for improving the condition of its members? With this money kindergartens and crèches are opened. The number of such establishments must be increased in order to free women from their household burdens. That can take place only with the aid of working women themselves as members of the coöperatives."

The wall newspaper has become a chronicle of the daily life of the workers and peasants written by themselves. Its contents deal with relations of workers in the factory and village, wage questions, conflicts of various kinds, the relations between hand and brain workers, technical questions, political and cultural life, workers' and peasants' clubs, books, the Red Army and Navy and religion.

LITERARY GROUPS *

The October Revolution created not only a new literature, but a host of new literary schools, whose theories affected all the arts, and whose programs became the center of sharp debates on revolution and culture. Pre-revolutionary Russian literature died in 1918-19; the

* The rest of this chapter is based on analysis of ten years of Soviet literature by Vyacheslav Polonsky, published in *Novy Mir*, Moscow, 1927.

reign of terror and the approaching famine frightened the old middle-class writers, who felt lost in the turmoil of a new world being born. Their mood was best expressed in *Dreamers' Notes*, a magazine edited by the poet Andrei Biely whose pages were filled with a sense of loneliness, terror and death. In the pages of this magazine Alexander Blok, the Symbolist poet, published his *Russian Dandy*, describing the débacle of the middle-class intellectual. "I am much too cultured," the Dandy remarks, "to fail to understand that it cannot possibly continue along these lines; the bourgeoisie will be destroyed. But if Socialism should prevail, then all that is left for us is to die." Another magazine, *The House of Art*, expressed the same hopeless mood in works by some of the foremost pre-revolutionary writers. These were, with some exceptions, hostile to the October Revolution, and regarded as traitors writers like Gorki, Serafinovitch, Blok and Briussov, who supported the Revolution.

In this atmosphere of intense hostility between the pro-revolutionary and anti-revolutionary intellectuals, the Futurists, headed by the poet Vladimir Maiakovski, attempted to assume the leadership of the new literature. They issued manifestoes proclaiming the need for a complete break with the bourgeois art of the past, and declaring that Futurism was proletarian art. Their slogans called for the destruction of the "dead citadel" of bourgeois art and the creation of "the living factory of the human mind"; they urged that the art collected in "old gloomy museums" should be replaced by a living art "everywhere—in the streets, the tramways, the factories, and in workers' homes." They published a few issues of a magazine called *Art of the Commune* and two numbers of another called *Artistic Work in Industry*.

In the early years of the Revolution, the Futurists sought recognition as the official group of revolutionary artists; but their attempt to speak in the name of the proletariat, their anarchic tendency and aggressive tactics, and above all their lack of a concrete program to meet the needs of the Revolution, aroused opposition in the Communist Party. "It would be a misfortune," Lunacharski, then Commissar of Education, said, "if artists of the new school were to establish themselves as the final expression of the State school of art, the exponents of the official, revolutionary art." Lunacharski attacked the attempt of Futurism "to speak in the name of the government, whereas it merely represents one school." While the government was seeking to bring general culture to the large mass of workers and peasants, the Futurists were considered an esthetic school representing the degeneration of bourgeois art, and hence incapable of solving the problems of revolutionary art. It is true, the workers listened spell-bound to the magnificent verses of Maïakovski, which he recited at mass-meetings, but the theories of Futurism meant nothing to them. As a result, Futurism soon lost its leading position in Soviet art and literature.

Futurism was dethroned while the civil wars were still raging. At that time the literary world was unorganized; poverty was rampant; paper was scarce; new books were rare; the strength of the Russian people was concentrated on the battle-front. Under these circumstances Bohemianism assumed the leadership of literature; the café became its center and the hand-written manuscript its medium of "publication." The Domino café on the Tverskaya Street in Moscow became a literary center where poets recited verses, critics read essays, and professors lectured on science. Here Serge Yessenin read

his first revolutionary poems; Maiakovski, Briussov, Kogan and others read their works; here, too, there developed a Bohemianism which the more robust writers soon abandoned. The desire for better literary centers led to the establishment in Moscow of the Palace of Art, the Writers' Club, and later, the House of the Commissariat of Education. The Writers' Club was founded in 1920. For the next three years it became the meeting place of all revolutionary artistic forces, which discussed every phase of the new culture—literature, psychoanalysis, the new theatre, the new music, the cinema, Communism, style. To the Writers' Club came the new poets, the new theatrical directors, the revolutionary university professors, the new novelists, political leaders with special interest in the arts. Some of the best known Soviet writers first read their works at this club.

It was in the café, however, that the Imagist school developed, including such poets as Vadim Shershenevitch, Anatole Marienhov and Alexander Kusikov. Though essentially an outsider, Serge Yessenin, too, passed through this school, whose headquarters was the Domino café on the Tverskaya Street in Moscow. Among the speculators, sailors, chorus girls, Soviet officials and political workers, actors and prostitutes who frequented the Domino, Shershenevitch and Marienhov held forth, often competing with the Futurist Maiakovski and Yessenin. Like most Soviet literary groups, the Imagists issued a manifesto marking the break of the new Soviet generation from Futurism, and like most Soviet literary groups, the Imagists claimed to be the first spark of the world spiritual revolution. To them form was everything; other things, they said, come as a matter of course. Going beyond the Futurists' attack on syntax, the Imagists advocated the "word upside down." They wished

to conquer thought by destroying grammar and freeing the word of content; they urged "form as an aim in itself, form as symbol and content." Because of their paradoxical attitude on the question of content, the success of the Imagists was short-lived, lasting only during the most hectic period of the civil wars.

In the absence of a new literature all kinds of experiments were tried. Various groups and cliques proclaimed the death of Futurism, Imagism, classical literature, Symbolism, and even poetry in general. There were movements, like Constructivism, which, regardless of its theories, produced valuable works; there were, on the other hand, movements during 1919-1921 which many Soviet critics today consider absurd except for their common motivation, which was the rejection of the old order and the welcoming of the new. However little the majority of these movements accomplished in creative literature, they all raised fundamental questions, such as: What should be the attitude of the Revolution toward the classic? Should the new era reject the old art? Shall the Revolution reject only the old themes or all the old principles of creation? It was around these questions that literary debates were carried on. At this period Western Europe, too, had its Futurists and Dadaists, prophesying new eras, proclaiming the death of the old art—and even the death of all art; but despite the similarity of names and sometimes even of esthetic theory, there was a profound difference dividing Soviet artistic experiment from Western European—for every movement in the Soviet arts lived or died by the supreme test as to whether or not it had anything to offer to the new social order.

While poetry was being developed by Futurists and Imagists, a group formed in 1921 turned its attention to

prose. This group called itself the Serapion Brotherhood. It developed out of the past; its literary teachers were E. Zamiatin and Victor Shklovski. The Serapion Brotherhood assumed a neutral attitude toward politics; they said they were not against the Revolution, yet they would not actively support it. This attempt at indifference to the tremendous changes taking place around them was expressed in their declaration of principles: "A work can reflect its period and it can also fail to do so." Nevertheless, events soon drove many of the Serapion Brotherhood to the Left; writers like Vsevolod Ivanov, Constantin Fedin and Nicholas Tikhonov produced novels and stories dealing with the Revolution; and because they carried on certain realistic traditions of the past, they developed a style which made them one of the leading prose groups in the new Russia. The writers of this group, bourgeois in its origin, are generally known as "Fellow Travellers," *i.e.*, people who are not active participants in the Revolution but are willing to "travel along" with it.

Meantime the workers organized their own literary group, known as "The Smithy." The outstanding members of this group—notably Gerassimov, Lyashko and Filipchenko—had published poems and stories before the Revolution, nevertheless as The Smithy they represented the first post-revolutionary attempt at proletarian literature. In the form of their poetry the writers of this group followed nineteenth century tradition; in content they sought to express the aspirations and disappointments of certain sections of the Russian workers. "Art," their manifesto declared, "is the medium of its class. Proletarian art is a mirror where the face of the working class looks at itself. Proletarian art is art which covers the triple surface of creative material of the working class in

a clear, concise and synthetic form, which conveys the line of struggle for the final aims of the proletariat. This art, by its very nature, is art for a big canvas; it must be large-scale, monumental art." The Smithy proclaimed themselves "the only group of proletarian writers which stands for the revolutionary advance guard of the workers, the Russian Communist Party."

The question of the relation of literature to the Revolution was complicated; terms had still to be defined. It was natural, therefore, that another group of proletarian writers, calling itself "October," should also proclaim itself to be the "only" group representing the revolutionary proletariat, and should repudiate The Smithy as anti-proletarian.

PROLET CULT

The new movement toward proletarian art and literature gave birth to still another group, whose name, derived from "proletarian culture," was Proletcult. Proletcult existed as far back as 1918; its organ from 1918 to 1921 was the magazine *Proletarian Culture*; its theoretician was A. A. Bogdanov, who wrote most of the articles in the magazine and most of the theses for the Proletcult conferences. Bogdanov began to expound the foundations of his theory of proletarian culture in 1910. There are, he said, three independent roads to Communism: the economic, the political, and the cultural. The struggle for the cultural emancipation of the proletariat is the struggle for "real and complete emancipation"; it is the struggle for the control of all the results and methods of bourgeois science, technique, and art; *i.e.*, all branches of knowledge. In taking over this cultural heritage from the past, Bogdanov said, the working

class must exercise the most active criticism from the proletarian viewpoint, for while the vital principle of bourgeois culture is individualism, that of proletarian culture is collectivism. The historic rôle of the proletariat is the complete reorganization of the life of humanity; after a revaluation of the old cultural heritage, the proletariat will reconstruct the old science and create a general organized science. Bogdanov worked for many years on such an organized science.

Proletarian culture, Bogdanov repeatedly declared, does not mean "merely a break with all the cultural heritage of the old world, since the proletariat is the legitimate heir of all the great achievements of the old world, both spiritual and material, and the proletariat cannot and must not reject this heritage." Discussing the possibility of proletarian art, he said: "Art is part of the ideology of a class, an element of its class-consciousness, hence an organized form of class life, a means of uniting and welding together class forces." Art, according to Bogdanov, is "capable of organizing not only the opinions of the people but also their knowledge, thoughts, feelings and dispositions. . . . Art is not only more far reaching than science; it has always been more powerful than science as a weapon for the organization of the masses, because the language of living symbols is nearer and more comprehensible to the masses." Emphasizing the class nature of poetry, Bogdanov maintained that "the poet has the viewpoint of a definite class; he looks at the world through its eyes, thinks and feels like the class from which he comes. Under the writer's personality is hidden the collective author, and poetry is part of this collective author's self-consciousness." From this it was possible to conclude that bourgeois art has a bad influence on proletarian art; but Bogdanov would

not reject the old art altogether, appealing to the importance of universal esthetic values.

While Bogdanov was the leading spirit in the Proletcult movement, it included other energetic thinkers and workers, such as Kalinin, Bessalk, Kerzhentsev, and Liebedev-Polianski. The latter urged that the proletariat establish a cultural dictatorship as well as an economic and political dictatorship. Under Bogdanov's leadership, Proletcult did in fact seek to dominate all fields of Soviet culture, but failed to control any. It committed the political error of creating an organization outside of the government apparatus. Leading Communists attacked this attempt as an independent organization, pointing out that proletarian culture could not be created in a laboratory. Bogdanov retired from Proletcult, and subsequently members of the Proletcult group itself, led by V. Pletnev, introduced many changes which brought it into closer touch with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Despite many mistakes and its failure to carry out a program too vast for its own forces, the Proletcult group influenced many young writers and artists.

SOVIET LEADERS ON PROLETARIAN CULTURE

The differences between the Proletcult movement and the Communists were clearly brought out by Lenin who declared that Bogdanov's theories about "proletarian culture" concealed, in effect, an opposition to Marxism. Lenin believed that proletarian culture could not be manufactured in laboratories or studios, but would evolve where the actual struggle against the old ways of life was going on. Speaking to the vanguard of the



Girl from the Forest (*A. Arkhipov*)

new Russian youth at the Third Congress of the Young Communist League in 1920, Lenin said:

"It is impossible for us to solve the question of proletarian culture without a clear understanding and exact knowledge of that culture which was created in the course of humanity's development; it is only by remaking this, that proletarian culture is possible. . . . Proletarian culture is not something arising from an unknown source; it is not the invention of people who call themselves specialists in the realm of proletarian culture. Such a notion is pure nonsense. Proletarian culture must be the legitimate development of those reserves of knowledge which society worked for under the oppression of Capitalism, the landlords, the officials. . . . All these roads lead, and continue to lead, to proletarian culture; just as political economy, recast by Marx, showed us the road on which human society should go, indicated the change to the class struggle, to the beginning of the proletarian revolution."

Three years later, in an article called *A Page from a Diary*, Lenin wrote: "While we are chattering about proletarian culture and its relation to bourgeois culture, facts and figures show us that even in respect to bourgeois culture the situation is none too good. It was to be expected, as figures show, that we should still be far behind in general education. Our progress in comparison with Czarist times [1897] is much too slow. This is a formidable warning and a rebuke to those who soar in the realm of proletarian culture. This shows how much hard work there is still to be done in order to attain the level of an ordinary civilized nation in Western Europe. This fact shows also what an enormous amount of work lies ahead of us before we can attain any sort of cultural level on the basis of our proletarian achievements."

While Bogdanov looked upon "culture" as something apart from economics and politics, Lenin looked on these three "independent roads" as an organic whole.

Only one thing remains for us to do [Lenin declared in his essay on *Coöperation*] to make our population "civilized" enough to understand the advantages of everyone participating in coöperation. . . . That is all. No other wisdom is necessary at the present time for the attainment of Communism. But in order to achieve this one thing, an entire revolution is necessary in the ranks of the masses of the people. . . . Our opponents have said more than once that we are attempting an absurd task in trying to implant Communism in an insufficiently cultured country. But they are mistaken in assuming that we began at the point which pedants consider correct; for our political and social revolution is the forerunner of that cultural revolution at the threshold of which we now stand. . . . This cultural revolution will suffice for us at present to make us an entirely Communist people, but for us this cultural revolution is full of enormous difficulties of a purely cultural nature (for we are illiterate), and also of a material nature. If we are to become cultured, we must have a certain development of the material means of production and a certain material basis. . . . A cultural revolution is a long drawn out and difficult period of persistent work in all fields, from the alphabet to astronomy, from bath tubs to air fleets, from trade schools to academies of fine arts, from the abolition of the old-fashioned forms of agriculture to the establishment of factories for artificial fertilizers, from top to bottom in all fields, everywhere there must be a seething of constant, uninterrupted toil, not only in cultural institutions, schools, and universities, libraries and factories, but throughout the entire country at every worker's bench. Otherwise the work will not be successful. The millions of the population must participate, for the work must be collective in character, and the majority must help under the leadership of the working class. Only such work

can bear the proud name of the cultural revolution which is necessary for the attainment of Communism.

Other Communist leaders of that period also participated in the discussions about proletarian art and culture. Trotzky, then head of the Red Army, published his *Literature and Revolution*, now obtainable in English, which was a landmark in Soviet literary criticism. As in the case of all who participated in these discussions, political theory determined Trotzky's views on proletarian art; from his views on the "permanent revolution" there naturally followed his militant approach to literature.

The bourgeoisie [he said] came into power fully armed with the culture of its time; the proletariat, on the other hand, comes into power fully armed only with the acute need of mastering culture. The problem of a proletariat which has conquered power consists, first of all, in taking into its own hands the apparatus of culture—the industries, schools, publications, press, theatres, etc.—which did not serve it before, and thus open up the path of culture for itself. . . . You imagine that the future development of culture will proceed in a regular, evolutionary manner; that the present seeds of proletarian culture will grow and develop and steadily become richer, that a real proletarian literature will be created which will subsequently blossom into Communist literature. No; development will not be along these lines. After the present respite, during which literature is being created not in the Party but in the State, a literature which is strongly influenced by the Fellow Travellers, there will come a period of renewed violence and civil war. We shall be dragged into it unavoidably. It is more than possible that the revolutionary poets will provide us with fine militant verses, but the consecutive development of literature will be sharply interrupted. All forces will be devoted to the direct struggle.

Trotsky repudiated the possibility of proletarian cul-

ture. "All the active forces," he said, "are concentrated in politics, and in the revolutionary struggle; everything else is relegated to the background; everything which is a hindrance is cruelly trampled under foot. In this process, of course, there is an ebb and flow; military Communism gives place to NEP, which in turn passes through various phases. But in its essence the dictatorship of the proletariat is not an organization for the production of the culture of a new society, but a revolutionary and military system struggling for it. One must not forget this. . . . We are bivouacking for a day. Our shirt has to be washed, our hair has to be cut and combed, and, most important of all, the rifle has to be cleaned and oiled. Our entire present-day economic and cultural work is nothing more than putting ourselves in order between two battles and two campaigns. The principal battles are ahead and may not be far off. Our epoch is not yet an epoch of a new culture but only the entrance to it." Trotzky maintained that the "twenty, thirty or fifty years of proletarian world revolution will go down in history as the most difficult climb from one system to another but in no case as an independent epoch of proletarian culture." He urged that the task of the proletarian intelligentsia in the coming years would not be to create "an abstract culture without any real foundation" but to build up "an actual, concrete culture; *i.e.*, the systematic, planned and, of course, critical absorption by the backward masses of the most necessary elements of that culture which already exists." It is impossible, he said, to begin to build "a new culture without assimilating the elements of the old culture."

Although he denied the possibility of an independent proletarian culture, Trotzky maintained that the transition period from Capitalism to Communism would pro-

duce a "transition" art, a new art entirely under the influence of the Revolution.

These theoretical disputes involved certain practical considerations. Who shall have the "hegemony" in Soviet literature and art? what attitude should the Communist Party adopt in this field? "In the domain of art," Trotzky urged, "the Party should not support the liberal principle of *laissez faire, laissez passer*. However, the crux of the question is: Where does interference begin and where does it end?" Nor should it be forgotten, he said, that besides a far-sighted and flexible policy in the arts there "must also be a decisive and severe, though of course not petty, censorship. This means, side by side with the continuous ideological struggle for influence over the best creative elements from the ranks of the petit bourgeoisie, the peasantry or the rural intelligentsia, we must wage a sharp struggle against all attempts on the part of the restorers to subject the new Soviet art to bourgeois influence."

SOVIET MAGAZINES

While these debates on the new literature and art were going on, young talents were beginning to publish their works in magazines. *Krasnaya Nov* and *Pechat i Revolutzia*, two Soviet magazines founded in the summer of 1921, opened a new period in Russian literature. Around *Krasnaya Nov* especially, there gathered the first groups of Soviet writers, proletarian and non-proletarian. However, its outstanding contributors were Fellow Travellers. As time went on, the literary situation became more complicated. The number of writers increased, literary differences became marked, and each group struggled for supremacy. The Proletcult move-

ment gave birth to 'The Smithy, which in turn gave birth to the proletarian writers' group October, which in turn developed into the All-Union Association of Proletarian Writers generally known by its Russian initials, VAPP. As literary and class viewpoints crystallized, there was formed the Union of Peasant Writers, while the former Futurists reorganized their group under the name LEF, after their new magazine. Each literary group had its own platform, its own critical views, and its own magazine.

In their new magazine LEF, the Futurists continued their old policy of seeking supremacy in the field of art and literature. They reiterated their belief that "there can be and should be no coalition whatsoever between LEF and the art of the past in its present day application." At times they even implied that art should be destroyed altogether, though their poets Maiakovski and Asejev were writing some of the finest poems for the new Russian literature. Because of their extreme views and their pretension to be the leaders of communist art, LEF, like the Futurist group in its earlier manifestation, failed to establish contact with the mass of workers. Certain members of the LEF group achieved great things in their respective fields, notably Eisenstein in the cinema and Meyerhold in the theatre, but only after loosening their ties with LEF. In this sense the LEF movement acted as a stimulus to Soviet art and literature, but the small group connected with the magazine failed in its ambition to establish a new, revolutionary esthetic ideal and to obtain the dominant position.

A wider influence was exercised by *Krasnaya Nov* and its editor, the critic A. K. Voronski, who began his literary career as a vigorous opponent of mysticism and

religion. His views, after the Revolution, are most clearly expressed in his essay on *Art as Knowledge of Life and the Age*. This emphasis on art as knowledge, as contrasted with Bogdanov's theory of art as organization, made Voronski the natural ally of the Fellow Travellers. Between him and them there were profound differences: Voronski was an active revolutionist; he fought against the decline of class hatred and the fighting spirit; he warned young writers against Tolstoian pacifism and egoism; he criticized the pessimism and melancholy of certain Soviet poets following the inauguration of the New Economic Policy; he opposed political passivity, urging young authors to express a clear and active acceptance of the Revolution. The Fellow Travellers, on the other hand, were a passive group, wishing to describe the "objective" truth of the life around them without accepting the Revolution in a positive way. But there were also two points of contact. What brought Voronski to the Fellow Travellers was their superior literary talent and their interest in "objective" truth. Describing the Fellow Travellers, Voronski said: "They represent real life, they help make it known to us, and in this sense they are able to organize the mind of the readers along lines necessary to Communism. They reflect the Revolution in a manner acceptable to Communists. Despite the mixed nature of this group, it has helped us to illustrate the Revolution, although there were among them shortcomings and certain artists with whom Communist critics were obliged to enter into dispute."

Voronski's tolerant attitude toward the Fellow Travellers brought him into sharp conflict with the proletarian writers grouped around the magazine *Na Postu* (*At the Post*), which appeared at a time when Soviet

literary groups were sharply differentiated. By 1923, the extreme right in Soviet literature was occupied by certain liberal pre-revolutionary writers who had assumed a neutral attitude toward the Revolution. These included writers like Alexei Tolstoi, Ilya Ehrenburg, E. Zamiatin, V. Veresayev, Maria Shaginian, Andrei Biely, Victor Shklovski, and Gleb Alexeiev. To the Left of these stood Fellow Travellers like Constantin Fedin, Vsevolod Ivanov, N. Tikhonov, N. Nikitin, Lidia Seifulina, Boris Pilniak, Leonid Leonov, A. Arosev, Valerie Briussov, Serge Yessenin, P. Oreshin, V. Lidin, A. Yakovlev, Pantaleimon Romanov, and S. Budantsev. The Futurists, grouped around the magazine LEF, constituted the Left Wing of the Fellow Travellers and included writers like Vladimir Maiakovski, Boris Pasternak, N. Asseiev, A. Kruchenikh, Serge Tretiakov, and V. Kamenski.

To the Left of the Futurists were the working class writers in The Smithy group, including M. Gerassimov, I. Filipchenko, V. Alexandrovski, G. Sannikov, S. Obradovitch, Feodor Gladkov (author of *Cement*), M. Volkov, N. Liashko, P. Nizivoi, Alexander Neverov (author of the *City of Bread*), and I. Novikov-Priboi. The popular poet Demian Biedny occupied a special place in Soviet literature. A proletarian poet whose verses on current events appeared almost daily in the press, he avoided active participation in any of the warring literary groups.

AT THE POST

To the Left of The Smithy was a group of younger writers including the poets Alexander Beziminski, Ivan Doronin and Serge Malashkin, and prose writers like Yuri Libidinski (author of *A Week*), A. Tarassov-

Rodinov, and the pre-revolutionary proletarian novelist Serafimovitch. Later the group was joined by other poets and novelists, including D. Furmanov, A. Fadeiev, and Yossif Utkin. It was this group which in 1923 founded the magazine *Na Postu* (*At the Post*), which revived the questions raised by the Proletcult movement; but unlike Bogdanov, who wanted to free art and literature from control by the Communist Party, the *Na Postu* group sought to win supremacy in literature through the direct intervention of the Party. *Na Postu* opened its campaign by a direct attack against the Fellow Travellers, then at the head of Soviet literature, denouncing writers like Boris Pilniak and Ilya Ehrenburg (whose *The Love of Jeanne Ney* has been published in America) as counter-revolutionaries. The Fellow Travellers, *Na Postu* proclaimed, distorted and degraded the Revolution; it was necessary to liberate Soviet literature from the influence of the past.

"The basic criterion for the estimation of a literary tendency is its social significance," *Na Postu* argued. "Only that literature can be useful from a social point of view in our time which organizes the mind and consciousness of the reader, especially of the proletarian reader, in the direction of the final aims of the proletariat as the creator of communist society—namely, proletarian literature. All other kinds of literature which act otherwise on the proletariat aids the rebirth of bourgeois and petit bourgeois ideology."

The views of the *Na Postu* group were formulated in the theses adopted at the first All-Union Conference of Proletarian Writers (VAPP) which it dominated. These theses may be summarized thus:

The rule of the proletariat is incompatible with the

domination of non-proletarian ideology and consequently non-proletarian literature.

In a class society, literature cannot be neutral, but must actively serve either class.

The talk about the possibility of peaceful coöperation in the field of literature, of peaceful competition of various literary-ideological tendencies is a reactionary utopia. Bolshevism has persistently fought against such a reactionary utopia.

Under present conditions literature is one of the last arenas in which is carried on the implacable class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie for the hegemony over the intermediary sections of society.

The negative attitude to proletarian culture and proletarian literature is historically bound up with that liquidatory trend which in 1922-25 crystallized in Soviet society, and within the Communist Party has been called the Opposition.

From the moment of its appearance in the historical arena until the present, the proletariat has created tremendous values both as regards material and spiritual culture.

The path which the proletariat has followed in the field of politics and economics should also be followed in the field of art—that is the road to hegemony, the seizure of power by the proletariat in the domain of literature.

The proletariat cannot maintain its hegemony over the peasantry unless it has its own independent class culture and its own literature. The workers must lead the non-proletarian elements not only in the field of politics and economics but also in the cultural field.

Proletarian literature knows that it must take all that is valuable and progressive from classic and contem-

porary bourgeois art and culture, but proletarian literature also knows that it must go much farther than the point at which the bourgeoisie halted in these fields; it knows that it must not only make use of the old culture but also transform it.

The prevailing type of Fellow Traveller is a writer who distorts the Revolution in literature and calumniates it, who is steeped in the spirit of nationalism and mysticism. Fellow Traveller literature is essentially literature directed *against* the proletarian Revolution. A decisive war must be waged against these anti-revolutionary elements.

However, there do exist Fellow Travellers of the Revolution. It is absolutely necessary to utilize them on the literary front. But this should be done only if proletarian literature can influence the best of the Fellow Travellers, and if these Fellow Travellers will group themselves around the proletarian writers.

This proletarian group already exists as the All-Union Association of Proletarian Writers (VAPP). We have entered that stage of cultural development when the mere recognition of proletarian culture is not enough. It is essential that recognition be given to the hegemony of this literature, to the principle of the stubborn, systematic struggle of this literature for victory, for the control of all kinds and shades of bourgeois and petit bourgeois literature.

Na Postu's declarations aroused a storm of debate, dividing the literary and political world into two camps. The struggle finally became so sharp that the Communist Party intervened. A special conference to decide the issues between *Na Postu* and its opponents was held in May, 1924, at the headquarters of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. At

this conference, Nikolai Bukharin, at that time editor of *Pravda* and one of the leading theoreticians of Bolshevism, reiterated his allegiance to proletarian literature. His own formula was that while science systematizes the minds of men, art systematizes their feelings. "Art," he said, "is the systematization of feelings in forms; the natural and immediate rôle of art is the generalization of feelings, their transmission in society." In the early days of Proletcult, Bukharin supported the movement for proletarian literature; he disagreed with Lenin on this question and was opposed to publishing in *Pravda*, official organ of the Communist Party, an article by a literary critic expressing Lenin's viewpoint. Nevertheless, at the 1924 conference which met to decide the rôle of various literary groups, Bukharin, while supporting the theories, opposed the tactics of the *Na Postu* group. He accused them of trying to simplify the cultural problem, of attempting to solve literary problems by force. "The cultural problem," he said, "is different from the military problem; it cannot be decided by blows or mechanical means." While favoring the encouragement of proletarian literary groups, Bukharin urged consideration for peasant literature and for the creative writing of the Soviet intelligentsia.

"Our society," Bukharin said, "has two planes of friction: the internal and the external. The external plane faces the bourgeois world, and there the class war is fiercer. But how about the internal plane? It is not sufficiently understood that within the Soviet Union our policy seeks to smooth over the class struggle instead of intensifying it. . . . What did Lenin say? He said our society is based on the collaboration of the peasant and the workers, to which may be added, and a toleration of the bourgeoisie."

Hence Bukharin opposed the claims of the *Na Postu* group to supremacy in the literary field, and to its attacks on the Fellow Travellers; he favored throwing literature open to free competition, so that the important questions of style and form could be solved on the basis of merit rather than by political pressure. "I favor," he said at the 1924 Party Conference, "a general leadership and the maximum of competition. Only thus can the problem be solved which this conference is considering." At the same time Bukharin disagreed with Trotzky's position on proletarian literature, saying that Trotzky was wrong because he disregarded the length of time necessary for the development of the proletarian dictatorship in various countries, and overestimated the speed with which the universal dictatorship of the proletariat would be attained.

Among those who supported Bukharin's policy of "the maximum of competition," though from a different standpoint, was the Commissar of Education, Anatole Lunacharski. Himself a writer and critic of considerable talent, as well as a Marxian scholar, Lunacharski had for many years studied almost every field of art. As Commissar of Education he devoted his energies to a wide variety of cultural questions, from establishing new schools and theatres to encouraging new poets. Many years of preoccupation with pre-revolutionary art had created in Lunacharski a profound respect for the past; he considered bourgeois culture a great treasure-house of esthetic pleasure and wisdom; he looked upon it as a means of understanding life, and believed that it brought order out of chaos. At the same time he was anxious that art should develop new forms, and was therefore friendly to all kinds of experiments. Science, he argues, deals with abstract forms, but art is experi-

ence; the artist's task is to concentrate life and intensify it, thus helping men to experience as much as possible.

Lunacharski held these views prior to the Revolution; subsequently he developed them farther. In his official position, he protected works of art regardless whether they belonged to past or present. Convinced that art in all its aspects is one of humanity's greatest achievements, he established a network of institutions for the preservation of the art of the past, to serve not only as a source of pleasure but as a stimulus for new creations. As a Marxist, he believed that art reflects the class struggle and is the organizer of emotional life; but he held that faith in the working class was sufficient guarantee against infection from middle-class art—especially in the Soviet Union where the influence of the working class on the bourgeois intelligentsia was stronger than the influence of the bourgeoisie on the workers. Furthermore, he said, the workers cannot possibly create their own class esthetics without a knowledge of the art of the past. By accepting both the bourgeois past and the proletarian future in art, Lunacharski became the intermediary between extreme views. He favored proletarian literature but opposed attempts to cut it off completely from classic and bourgeois literature; he believed in the future of the proletarian writers but did not think the time was ripe for suppressing non-proletarian writers; he favored the independent organization of proletarian writers and their support by the government but opposed their domineering attitude toward non-proletarian art. At the literary conference of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in May, 1924, he declared:

"A purely political approach such as the *Na Postu* group advocates is erroneous because it does not reckon

with the uniqueness of the subject whose fate they wish to decide. It is impossible to consider the question of literary policy without taking into consideration the peculiar laws of art. Otherwise we may just as well bury all literature. . . ." In direct opposition to the views of *Na Postu* and the All-Union Association of Proletarian Writers (VAPP) Lunacharski maintained that all art is useful if it shows talent. Furthermore, since a certain amount of education is necessary for a writer, he believed that Soviet literature of the immediate future was likely to be created by members of the intelligentsia. "The only result of our discussion," he concluded, "is the realization of the fact that it is necessary to protect and support proletarian literature as our main hope, but under no circumstances must we estrange the Fellow Travellers."

THE COMMUNIST PARTY ON LITERATURE

The discussion on the Communist Party's policy toward literature was begun at the conference in May, 1924, and the resolution which it passed was incorporated in the resolution on the press adopted by the Thirteenth Conference of the Communist Party. In 1925 a special commission was established to examine this resolution and extend it. The enlarged resolution was later adopted by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party. The conference held by the Publications Department of the Central Committee in May, 1924, declared:

"The basic work of the Party in the field of literature should be concentrated on the creative work of the workers and peasants, who are becoming worker and peasant writers in the process of the cultural develop-

ment of the wide masses of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. Worker and peasant correspondents constitute a new social force which participates actively in the political and economic structure of the Soviet State and is organically bound up with the masses of workers and peasants. The worker and peasant correspondents should be regarded as future journalists and as a reserve from which will arise new worker and peasant writers."

The resolution further stressed the necessity of helping both worker and peasant writers from factory and farm in the same manner as those from the intelligentsia who had entered the Party in the early days of the Revolution and during the period of military Communism. The resolution laid special emphasis on giving every assistance to writers and poets in the Young Communist League. Furthermore, the conference approved the policy adopted by A. K. Voronski, editor of *Krasnaya Nov*, toward the Fellow Travellers, thus opposing the *Na Postu* policy. Regarding *Na Postu's* attitude toward the Fellow Travellers, the resolution declared that the magazine *Na Postu* estranged from the Party and the Soviet government the most talented writers and at the same time retarded the actual growth of proletarian writers by its criticism, directed both against the Fellow Travellers and the serious work of proletarian writers. The conference announced that no literary tendency, school, or group could act in the name of the Communist Party. This was a severe blow at those groups which were trying to obtain "hegemony" in the literary field by purely mechanical means.

The resolution adopted at the conference of May, 1924, was preparatory in its nature. The details were worked out by a special commission. A resolution in

accordance with the conclusions arrived at by the commission was adopted by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party on July 1, 1924, as final. This resolution formulated the Party's policy toward literature and the arts and announced decisions of far-reaching importance in Soviet culture. Since it is the clearest expression of the official Communist attitude toward art, it is published in full in an appendix. In substance it opposed a "frivolous and contemptuous" attitude toward the art of the past as well as toward specialists in style. It stressed the class nature of art, but pointed out that literature is "infinitely more varied than politics." Toward the Fellow Travellers and peasant writers, and even toward frankly bourgeois writers supporting the Soviet régime, the Party urged patience and tact so as to hasten their development toward the Communist viewpoint. On the question of proletarian literature, the resolution declared that "the proletariat may already possess an exact criterion of the social political contents of literary works, but it does not possess definite replies to all questions concerning artistic form." The Party, the resolution continued, should aid proletarian writers materially and morally, but should not give any one literary group a monopoly of the field. "The leadership of literature belongs to the working class as a whole." With this basic understanding, there should be "free competition of various groups and tendencies in the field of literature." The Party condemned "any underestimation of the great importance of the struggle for the ideological hegemony of proletarian writers"; but it condemned, at the same time, "Communist conceit" and attempts to develop "hothouse proletarian literature." Soviet literature was to develop a style suitable for the mass of workers and peasants.

This resolution, outlining the official attitude of the Communist Party, brought a certain amount of calm into the literary field. One of its immediate results was to split the VAPP group in two: a minority which maintained its old attitude "impenitent", and a majority which accepted the decisions of the Party. A new generation of writers and critics took over the management of *Na Postu*, and signalized its new orientation by rechristening the magazine *Na Literaturnom Post* (*At the Literary Post*). The addition of the word *literary* to the title of the Left Wing's publication was followed by considerable improvement in its contents. In addition the editors adopted the slogans: study, creation, self-criticism. While the old editors said, "No matter if a work is bad, it is our own," the new editors said, "Our own, but not bad." In general, the writers of the Soviet Union, organized in various schools and groups, accepted the view of the Communist Party that they must not seek to obtain "hegemony" through political means, but should stick to business and gain such eminence as they could on the merit of their work.

CHAOTIC FERMENT

The Revolution affected the arts variously. Their development will be described in the chapters that follow, where it will be seen that Soviet art as a whole did not change simply, but underwent many conflicting trends in which the Revolution sought its artistic form. Speaking of this *sturm und drang* period in 1920 Lenin said:

The awakening, the activity of forces which will create a new art and culture in Soviet Russia is good, very good. The stormy rate of this development is understandable and useful.

We must and shall make up for what has been neglected for centuries. The chaotic ferment, the feverish search for new solutions and new watchwords, the "Hosanna" for certain artistic and spiritual tendencies today, the "crucify them!" tomorrow—all that is unavoidable. The Revolution is liberating all the forces which have been held back, and is driving them up from the depths to the surface. Let us take an example. Think of the pressure exercised on the development of our painting, sculpture and architecture by the fashions and moods of the Czarist court, as well as by the taste, the fancies of the aristocrats and the bourgeoisie. In a society based on private property the artist produces goods for the market; he needs buyers. Our Revolution has lifted the pressure of this most prosaic state of affairs from the artists. It has made the Soviet State their protector and patron. Every artist, and everybody who wishes to, can claim the right to create freely according to his ideal, whether it turns out good or not. And so you have the ferment, the experiment, the chaos.

But of course we are Communists. We must not put our hands in our pockets and let chaos ferment as it pleases. We must consciously try to guide this development, to form and determine its results. In that we are still lacking, greatly lacking. . . . We are much too much "iconoclasts." We must retain the beautiful, take it as an example, hold on to it, even though it is "old." Why turn away from real beauty and discard it for good and all as a starting point for further development just because it is "old?" Why worship the new as a god to be obeyed just because it is "new?" That is nonsense, sheer nonsense. There is a great deal of conventional art hypocrisy in it, too, and respect for the art fashions of the West. Of course, unconscious! We are good revolutionaries, but we feel obliged to point out that we stand at the "height of contemporary culture." I have the courage to show myself a "barbarian." I cannot value the works of expressionism, futurism, cubism, and other *isms* as the highest expressions of artistic genius. I don't understand them. They give me no pleasure.

But [Lenin added] our opinion on art is not important. Nor is it important what art gives to a few hundreds or even thousands of the population as great as ours.

Art belongs to the people. It must have its deepest roots in the broad masses of workers. It must be understood and loved by them. It must be rooted in and grow with their feelings, thoughts and desires. It must arouse and develop the artist in them.

Are we to give cake and sugar to a minority when the mass of workers and peasants still lack black bread? I mean that, not, as you might think, only in the literal sense of the word, but also figuratively. We must keep the workers and peasants always before our eyes. We must learn to reckon and to manage for them. Even in the sphere of art and culture. So that art may come to the people, and the people to art, we must first of all raise the general level of education and culture . . . Many people are honestly convinced that the difficulties and dangers of the moment can be overcome by "bread and circuses." Bread—certainly! Circuses—all right! But we must not forget that the circus is not a great, true art, but a more or less petty entertainment. Do not let us forget that our workers and peasants are not a Roman mob. They are not maintained by the State, they maintain the State by their work. They "made" the Revolution and defended their work with unexampled sacrifices, with streams of blood. Our workers and peasants truly deserve more than circuses. They have the right to true, great art. So, before everything else, wide popular education and instruction. They are the cultural soil—assuming the bread assured—on which a truly new, great art will grow up, a Communist art, arranging its forms in accordance with its content. Our "intellectuals" are faced with stupendous and most worthy tasks. To understand and fulfill these tasks would be tribute to the proletarian revolution for opening wide to them, too, the doors that lead to freedom.⁴

⁴ V. Clara Zetkin: *Reminiscences of Lenin*; Modern Books, Ltd., London, 1929.

Lenin's words indicate the demands which post-revolutionary life was making on the Soviet arts, as well as the great opportunity it offered them. How they developed under these circumstances the following chapters will show; but in tracing their development it must be borne in mind that the four years from 1917 to 1920 inclusive were racked by upheavals which involved the entire population and drew the energies and resources of the entire country into the whirlpool of civil war. No sooner did the Soviet government sign the peace of Brest-Litovsk with the Germans than the young workers' and peasants' republic was attacked by the imperialist powers of the world and the counter-revolutionary Russian generals who served as their agents. After the most desperate fighting the armed workers and peasants finally succeeded in driving Kolchak out of Siberia and the Urals, and Denikin out of Southern Russia and the Ukraine. In the same year they smashed the counter-revolutionary army of Yudenich at the gates of Petrograd. In 1920 the Allied troops were compelled to relinquish their positions in northern Russia; and the Soviet republic was able to pierce the blockade established by Poland and the Baltic states, in the interests of the West European powers. At the end of 1920 the last of the counter-revolutionary chieftains, General Wrangel, was driven out of Crimea, and only two years later did the Japanese withdraw from Vladivostok. The tension of the civil war was intensified by the famine and by general economic disorganization which naturally affected all the arts. Writers could not publish their works because of the paper shortage; theatre directors had to invent the simplest settings for lack of material; movie units operated with pre-war apparatus. The imperialist blockade cut off cultural contact with the

world together with food, credits and machinery. Yet out of these very conditions the Soviet Republic has developed a rich and vigorous art which, at least in the theatre, the cinema and fiction, has opened new horizons for the world; an art which is new in history because for the first time it is the expression of the organized working class in power.

The diversion of energy from the politics of literature to the creation of literature following the controversy of 1924 has resulted in tremendous growth. The five years that have passed since the Party resolution stilled the troubled waters of controversy over the dictatorship of proletarian literature have witnessed new poems, plays and novels, powerful and finely wrought, many of which can justly be called "proletarian literature," and all of which, in one way or another, reflect the new life ushered in by the Revolution. In the following chapter, this life, as described by the poets and novelists, will be considered concretely. It must be pointed out, however, that Soviet life changes rapidly; what is true today may no longer be true tomorrow. Where social life is so consciously and ruthlessly directed by the organized working class, decades may be leaped over in a year. The arts are considered in this book only as they were affected by the October revolution and the introduction of the New Economic Policy. As this book goes to press, the first reports of the operations of the Five Year Plan indicate that a new period of development in Soviet life has opened, to be followed, it may be assumed, by a new turn in Soviet art and literature.

RESOLUTION ON LITERATURE ADOPTED BY THE POLITICAL BUREAU OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The resolution on literature adopted by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on July 1, 1924, was as follows:

A. GENERAL PROBLEMS

1. *Character of the Period:* The rise in the material situation of the masses in recent times, together with the change in their mentality brought about the Revolution, the increase in mass activity and the tremendous extension of their horizon, creates a great growth of cultural demands. Thus we are entering a phase of the cultural revolution which constitutes a pre-requisite for the future development toward Communist society.

2. *The Cultural Heritage of the Past:* Since the Party sees in proletarian writers the future leaders of Soviet literature, it must fight against all frivolous and contemptuous estimates of the cultural heritage of the past.

3. *Attitude Toward Specialists in Style:* The Party must fight in every way against a frivolous and contemptuous attitude toward specialists in style.

4. *Provocation of the Class Struggle in Literature and New Forms of Struggle:* Since the class war in general is not yet over, it has not ceased on the literary front. However, it would be absolutely incorrect to lose sight of the basic fact of our social life, the seizure of power by the workers and the existence of the proletarian dictatorship in this country. Prior to the seizure of power, the proletarian party provoked the class struggle for the disintegration of society as a whole; during the period of the proletarian dictatorship, the proletarian

party is faced with the task of uniting with the peasantry and slowly winning them over, and also collaborating to a certain extent with the bourgeoisie and slowly eliminating them. It must also solve the question of securing the services of technicians and all kinds of intellectuals for the Revolution, and taking them away from the bourgeoisie. Thus, although the class war is not over, it has changed its method; before the seizure of power, the proletariat strove for the destruction of the existing order, but during the period of its dictatorship the chief plank in its platform is that of the "peaceful organization of work."

5. *Class and Neutral Art and the Particular Form in Which the Class Nature of Art Is Expressed:* Such a thing as neutral art in a class society does not and cannot exist, although the class nature of art generally and of literature especially is infinitely more varied than that of politics, for instance.

6. *Attitude Toward New Bourgeois Literature:* The complicated nature of the economic growth of contradictory and even directly and mutually hostile forms, the consequent process of the revival and strengthening of the new bourgeoisie as a result of this development, the unavoidable, though unconscious, attraction toward it of a section of the old and new bourgeoisie, the crystallization from the depths of society of new ideological agents for this bourgeoisie, must all find expression on the *literary* surface of life. The struggle against this literature arises from the very essence of its origin and its significance.

7. *Attitude Toward Fellow Travellers:* In our attitude toward the Fellow Travellers it is necessary to bear in mind their differences, the significance of many of them as skilled "specialists" of literary technique, and

the existence of vacillations among this group of writers. The general attitude here should be tactful and guarded; *i.e.*, it should be one calculated to hasten their approach to Communist ideology.

8. *Attitude Toward Peasant Writers:* Peasant writers should be welcomed in a friendly manner and given the benefit of our support. The task before us consists in bringing these groups over to the proletarian ideology without, however, obliterating their peasant literary-artistic symbols, which are essential if they are to influence the peasantry.

B. PROLETARIAN LITERATURE

9. *Is Proletarian Literature Possible?* Both proletarian and peasant literature constitute a part of the cultural growth of the masses which has resulted from the material improvement of the masses in recent times and the changes in thought resulting from the Revolution. This literature is manifold in form, ranging from embryonic forms like the production of worker correspondents, peasant correspondents, wall newspapers, etc., to ideological and literary productions.

10. *Difficulties in the Path of Proletarian Literature:* It must be borne in mind that this task is infinitely more difficult than other tasks to be accomplished by the proletariat, for under capitalist control, its workers could already prepare themselves for the victorious Revolution, form bodies of fighters and leaders, and work out a splendid ideological weapon for the political struggle. But it could not prepare itself in the natural sciences or technique; nor could it, as a culturally oppressed class, develop its artistic form or style. The

proletariat may already possess an exact criterion of the social-political contents of literary works, but it does not possess definite answers to all questions concerning artistic form.

11. *Is It Possible to Speak of the Hegemony of Proletarian Literature as an Accomplished Fact in Our Time?* The proletariat has to make up much lost time before it can have a command of the art of literature. There is as yet no hegemony of proletarian writers and the Party should help these writers to win for themselves the historical right to this hegemony.

12. *The Task of Proletarian Literature:* Sooner or later the conquest of a position in the field of literature must take place. Hence, work for the conquest of a position; *i.e.*, for a command of language, the development of our own artistic forms, our own style. The proletariat has not yet obtained general answers to all questions concerning artistic forms. An extensive command of the subject in all its aspects, without restricting it to any one factor, is necessary to make it the literature not of a group, but of a great militant class which is the leader of millions of peasants.

13. *Attitude Toward Proletarian Writers:* The Party should aid their growth and assist in organizing them in every way. There should be both material and moral support.

14. *Concerning the Privilege of Leadership by Any One Literary Group and the Monopoly of Literary Publication by Any One Group:* It is out of the question that there should be a decree or Party declaration legalizing the monopoly by any group or literary organization of literary publication. Although the Party supports both morally and materially proletarian and

peasant literature and helps the Fellow Travellers, it cannot recognize the monopoly of any one group—even a group which may be the most proletarian in regard to ideology and subject matter. To do so would mean the destruction of proletarian literature.

15. *Who Shall Have the General Leadership of Literature?* The leadership of literature belongs to the working class as a whole, with all its material and ideological resources.

16. *The Hegemony of One Group, or Competition?* The Party should declare itself in favor of the free competition of various groups and tendencies in the field of literature. Any other solution to the question would be quasi-bureaucratic.

17. *Concerning the Underestimation of the Struggle for the Ideological Hegemony of Proletarian Writers:* Any underestimation of the great importance of the struggle for the ideological hegemony of proletarian writers must be condemned. The Party slogan should be against Capitalism on the one hand, and against "Communist conceit" on the other.

18. *The Negative Aspect of the Development of Working Class Writers:* The Party should prevent by every possible means the development of "Communist conceit" among proletarian writers. The Party should also fight against the attempt to develop purely hot-house proletarian literature.

19. *Writers, Artists and Critics:* The Party should indicate to all workers in the field of literature the necessity of a correct division of the functions of critics and writers of *belles lettres*. The latter should concentrate on literary production, using the vast amount of material of our epoch.

C. CRITICISM AND THE LEADERSHIP OF LITERATURE

20. *The Task of Communist Criticism:* The foregoing statements show that *criticism* is one of the chief educational weapons in the hands of the Party. Without for one moment relinquishing the Communist position or giving way in the least on points of proletarian ideology, Communist criticism must expose the objective class meaning of various literary works. It must fight ruthlessly against all counter-revolutionary aspects of literature. At the same time, it must show the greatest tact, care and patience in regard to those literary workers who might join with the proletariat.

21. *The Negative Side of Communist Criticism:* Communist criticism must avoid adopting a tone of command. Communist criticism will have profound educational significance only when it relies on its ideological superiority. Marxist criticism must root out all pretentious semi-illiterate "Communist conceit." The slogan of Marxist criticism must be *study*: it must resist all those in its midst who are superficial and self-satisfied.

22. *Form and Style in Artistic Productions:* While recognizing the social class-content of literary tendencies, the Party as a whole cannot concern itself with every tendency in the field of literature. Since the Party is the leader of literature as a whole, it cannot support any *one* faction (classifying these factions on the basis of their different opinions as to form and style)—just as the Party cannot decide, by resolutions, questions as to the nature of the family, although in general it guides, and must guide, the formation of new social customs. Everything points to the eventual creation of a style suitable to this age, but it will be created by other

methods. This question has not been decided. All attempts, however, to bind the hands of the Party at this stage of the cultural development of the country must be opposed.

23. *National Literature*: It is necessary to pay more attention to the development of the literatures of the national minorities in the various republics of the Soviet Union.

24. *The Popular Character of the New Literature*: The Party must stress the necessity of creating literature suitable for the mass of worker and peasant readers.

25. *The New Form*: There should be a more courageous and decisive break with genteel prejudices in literature, and all technical achievements of the old literary masters should be used in a manner that will be comprehensible to the masses.⁵

⁵ See *Novy Mir*, November, 1927, Moscow.

CHAPTER II

MEN AND WOMEN IN SOVIET LITERATURE

By Joshua Kunitz

THE PROLETARIAT

The emergence of the Russian proletariat as a class-conscious social group and as a bearer of collectivist ideals is relatively recent, dating from the nineties of the last century. The formation of a considerable working-class, the transformation of a growing number of peasants from enslaved village "souls" into "free" factory hands was the inevitable concomitant of the rise of the bourgeoisie, the effect of the belated Industrial Revolution and of the gradual urbanization of agrarian Russia. In 1812, the city comprised only about four percent of the total population of the empire; in 1851, seven percent; in 1878, nine percent; in 1898, thirteen percent. There were in 1860 only about 15,000 industrial enterprises employing a little over half a million workers; but by 1887, the number of enterprises had grown to 30,888 and the number of workers to 1,300,000; while in 1897, only ten years later, there already were 39,020 enterprises employing 2,098,200 workers. Thus, while the speculator, the government contractor, the industrialist and banker were rapidly usurping places of dignity and honor, while their bejewelled ladies began to appear in the theatres and at public functions escorted by impoverished noblemen

and impecunious princes, while their sumptuous but tasteless palaces began to rear their gaudy roofs along the most exclusive streets of the capitals, far in the suburb, under the ominous shadow of belching smokestacks, an ever increasing army of begrimed men, emaciated women and pale children, were ceaselessly laboring to pile up more and more wealth for the new industrial and commercial middle class.

Dazed by exploitation, crushed by poverty, the workers were at first in no position to offer any resistance. But gradually they began to consolidate, and by 1896, more than 29,000 workers struck in 118 different enterprises. During the same year the great St. Petersburg textile strike, involving 30,000 workers, took place. In 1897 there were 145 strikes, and the following year, 215. The worker was becoming class-conscious, and more and more susceptible to revolutionary ideas. The working class was becoming a social force: it attracted the revolutionary intellectuals who until then had fruitlessly centered their attention on the village. Periodicals and books with a Marxian orientation began to make their appearance. The working class itself became more articulate; it developed its own intellectuals, its own leaders, writers, poets. Instead of merely being reflected in the works of the middle class writers whose leanings had been mainly populist, the workers now set out to reveal themselves in their own literature. Within the womb of the old society the germ of proletarian culture and proletarian literature began to evolve.

But before we discuss the proletarian as he revealed himself in his own writing, it might not be amiss, for the purposes of comparison and contrast, to examine his image as it was reflected in the literature created by and for the middle and upper classes. In this connec-

tion, it is important to bear in mind that up to the middle of the nineteenth century literature in Russia was written almost exclusively by members of the land-owning nobility, that only toward the latter half of the century liberal representatives of the then rising middle classes began to hammer their way into the world of letters, and that it was only in the nineties that the first voices from the lower depths began to reverberate through the alleys and beat against the ivory portals of Russian art. And since aristocratic supremacy in literature had, with the exception of a few octogenarians—Tolstoi, Fet, etc.—virtually declined before the proletariat developed as an important economic and political factor, it is natural that in the early literature the worker type is either completely absent (as in the works of Zhukovski, Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Fet, Tiutchev, Tolstoi) or mentioned only casually, and not very sympathetically (as in Turgenev, Goncharov, Herzen, Grigorovich).

As we have indicated, in 1860, there were already 15,000 industrial enterprises in Russia. But even in the forties some far-sighted landowners, to save themselves from ruin and to utilize those peasants for whom they had not enough land, began to emulate Western Europe by erecting factories on their estates. It is such a factory, for instance, that Turgenev mentions in his story *Lgov*, and Goncharov in his *An Ordinary Story*. In neither of these narratives do we have the worker depicted. Goncharov suggests only vaguely that in the glass factory the workers are "flogged" when they "commence to behave foolishly," while Turgenev makes his fisherman serf thank God for not having been put to work in the paper mill, where another old man like him is being worked to death as water-carrier. Grigorovich,

however, in his novel *Fishermen* (1853) gives a comparatively careful portrait of the factory worker Zakhar.

Like most of his pre-emancipation contemporaries, Grigorovich was preoccupied with the peasant. The peasant was extolled and sentimentalized over. He was a philosopher and a poet, he was a real Russian with the wisdom of the soil shining in his every word. The rising city and the factory tended to lure the peasant from his poetic fields and forests into the vice and ugliness of the factory. The machine had a demoralizing effect on the peasant worker, and the peasant worker, when he came back to the village, had, in his turn, a demoralizing effect on the other peasants. In an agrarian, aristocratic, patriarchal milieu, a free proletarian was a new and disturbing phenomenon, which, according to Grigorovich, "is unfortunately becoming more widespread with the increase of the number of factories." Indeed, Zakhar is outspoken, arrogant, self-confident, and a bit sardonic and contemptuous. No wonder the humane, gentlemanly Grigorovich, prone to pity the humble and respectfully grateful peasant, was vexed with the peculiarly arrogant air of Zakhar, and made a villain of him, a disruptive element in the mellowness of the village idyl. And even Herzen, the westernized, revolutionary Herzen, reveals the typical, reactionary land-owning nobleman when in one of his letters he refers to Zakhar in the following significant words: "Now, the enemy who appears in the *Fishermen* is an internal, a domestic enemy: this is the beginning of an entirely new struggle—the struggle between the soil-tilling, modest, simple patriarchal peasant and the bourgeois proletariat who works in the cities, the factories, and who leads a cursed, devil-may-care existence."

The clearness with which Herzen foresaw the ultimate differentiation of Russian society was, no doubt, due to his prolonged stay in industrial England and in the other European countries where the proletariat had long since become a distinct economic class, and an exponent of a distinct social philosophy. In Russia, the proletarian was not yet clearly distinguishable from the peasant. When he went to work as a laborer along the Volga or as a miner in the Ural region, the peasant did not sever his ties with the village. More often than not, his family, his wife and children, remained in the country. The dream of the peasant worker was to save up a few rubles to pay the taxes or to buy a horse and to hasten back to the soil. Neither subjectively nor objectively was the normal Russian worker a proletarian in the full modern sense of the word. Accordingly, most of the writers, except the few who were intimately acquainted with conditions in Western Europe, failed to draw a distinct line of demarcation between worker and peasant, and employed the vaguely generic term "people," which to them seemed synonymous with "peasant." The "people" suffered—on the fields, in the mines, along the river fronts.

To the middle class intellectuals who now invaded the literary profession, the most odious thing in Russia was the autocracy. They were dreaming of a democratic Russia rising on the foundation of a free and prosperous peasantry. In the peasant they felt their natural ally. Thus the Populist movement arose. And even later, when Socialist ideas began to filter into Russia, when the proletariat began to grow numerically, most of the intellectuals had their hopes still fixed on the village. They, like Herzen, felt that the factory had a degrading influence on man's individuality.

On the whole, however, the worker, like the peasant, was at first portrayed as a drunken, browbeaten, exploited individual, who drank not because he was happy-go-lucky, but because he wanted to find surcease from the maddening sameness and drudgery of his life. "It's fine when one ceases to feel anything," exclaims a worker in one of Reshetnikov's story. "But understand, you dammed log, you!" says a metal worker to his wife in one of Uspenski's stories, "Is your husband a drunkard or not? I drink just enough, just enough to rest my soul."

Only after the seventies do we occasionally meet with the fleeting image of a worker, offering incontrovertible evidence that he, instead of being a mere counterpart of the peasant, is beginning to develop an utterly different personality and a definitely proletarian attitude toward life. "The half-lazy, slow, bent walk of the soil-tiller has given place to the hasty, vigorous, challenging walk of the factory worker. One does not see any gingerly movements and bent backs here. One does not see sweetly-ingratiating, slavish humility in the faces; everything looks frank, open, virile." (Zlatovratsky in the *Wanderer*.) This passage was written in 1884. But even in 1870, in Fedorov-Omulevski's *Step by Step*, in one of the chapters we are given the first intimation in Russian literature of the revolutionary potentialities of the awakening proletariat. The new manager in the government glass factory had increased the hours of labor, lowered the wages, and flogged obstreperous workers. The workers, losing all patience and incited by a couple of disguised intellectuals, broke out into mutiny. The manager was flogged, the Cossacks were beaten back, and, for once, the workers were victorious.

The awakening of the factory workers and their

warm response to the secret educational work conducted among them by the Narodnik intellectuals were also brought out in Staniukovich's *No Escape* (1870).

Gradually the worker begins to assume more and more definite, individual contours. Here and there, and since the nineties rather insistently, the factory worker, endowed with a modicum of class-consciousness, attuned to revolutionary propaganda, active in underground organizations, hungry for knowledge and a decent life, projects himself in the works of Korolenko, Kuprin, Boborykin, Veresaiev, Serafimovich, Gorki, etc. Even the *lumpen-proletariat* struts into the lime-light, attired by Gorki in all the trappings of a romantic superman. Peasant adulation disappears. Bunin's *Village*, Tchekhov's *Peasants*, Gorki's *Chelkash*, are all indications of the intellectuals' bitter disappointment in the peasant. The Village they depict is obfuscated, cruel; the peasant, selfish, stupid, brutal. Obviously, according to them, the hero of the future is the city proletarian.

However, the confused notion in the minds of the intelligentsia with regard to the worker, the vagueness with which for the most part they delineated him, had an objective reason: the proletariat was still in an embryonic stage, it was not yet clearly distinguishable from the peasantry. Indeed, not infrequently the worker regarded himself as a peasant, the village as his rightful home, agricultural husbandry as his natural occupation. The city was exile; the factory, temporary imprisonment. It is the undertone of nostalgia for the strong odors of the soil, for the comforting proximity of cattle, for the creaking water-well and the joy of harvest time that vibrates in every utterance of the first Russian proletarian writers.

*I am torn away from my family,
From my free fields
My life is passing away
Under the yoke of slavery,*

complains Shkulev (b. 1868), one of the early proletarian poets. He longs to get back to the village, the hut, his wife, and his children:

*To the village, to freedom,
To my own little hut,
To my dear little help-mate,
My flock of children.*

But interwoven with this lugubrious strain, there is discernible at times a note of manly defiance and proletarian solidarity.

We are men, not animals, not dumb beasts . . . writes Niechaiev (b. 1859), the grandfather of proletarian poetry. While Shkulev threateningly flings into the teeth of the rich and the mighty:

*I have not come to beg,
Give me not bread as alms;
There are many like me—
We are all strong, you must realize this.*

And a little later Alexei Gmyrev (1887-1911) momentarily forgets his dejection and, in an outburst of faith in his class, declaims:

*To suffer and not to lose heart,
And with faith in the working class
Make ready for mortal combat.*

Gradually, the interminable complaints about "evil fate," "helpless childhood," and the lost rustic paradise begin to recede to the background. The psychological ambivalence is resolved in a vision of the proletariat as the emancipator of mankind.

With the twentieth century came revolutionary fermentation, strikes, political associations, the disgraceful Russo-Japanese War. The youthful proletarian giant became conscious and proud of his own strength; hammer in hand he was ready to smash the old order to pieces. The Revolution of 1905 broke out. Though finally crushed, the grandeur and pathos of the abortive revolution, the railroad strike, the Workers' Soviet in St. Petersburg, the barricades in Moscow, left an indelible impression on the imagination of the worker and prepared him psychologically for the Revolution of 1917.

The October Revolution brought the proletariat to the fore. From the shops and the factories, from the mills and the suburbs, the workers, now thoroughly awakened to the rôle they were destined to play, advanced toward power. Foremost on every front, leading in every battle, fighting counter-revolution and foreign invasion, the workers paid dearly for their economic emancipation and political power. To destroy the old, to crush opposition—these were the first tasks of the Communist proletariat. These demanded determination, iron discipline, unquenchable hatred for the past, and, above all, a fiery faith in the ultimate triumph of the proletariat. No pity, no softness, no doubts in those days of intense living, intense fighting, and intense dying.

"Without the slightest tremor," says the Bolshevik Surikov in Libedinski's novel *A Week*, "I myself would carry out death sentences, and all that because I knew

for certain . . . that, though this was a bloody road, it was the only road out of the horror that ruled over the lives of people in this world." And like most of his comrades, Surikov "was sorry for people, and suffered from their sufferings, but knew that only through the death of the enemies of the Revolution was possible the road to Communism." Therefore he was so merciless. "I had reembodied," he says, "my great pity as a great hatred. And I think that that is what every Communist does. The time will come, and I hope it will come soon, when this great human pity will make the life of man on earth most beautiful. Then the suffering of one near to him will wound a man painfully. People will treat with extreme care another's organism, that beautiful human body, built like yours or mine, which like them suffers and is hurt. It will be so. But, just now, that pity must be turned into hate."

The Surikovs, the Communists, the leaders of the proletariat, constituted an almost infinitesimal minority in the overwhelmingly peasant population of Russia. Yet because of revolutionary solidarity and definiteness of purpose, they became the nucleus toward which all inchoate elements gravitated. They were the ruthless, vigilant vanguard of the Revolution, behind whom marched the many millions of worker-peasant masses. Through hunger and disease, through smoke and fire, through rivers of their own, and others', blood, the workers, the Bolsheviks have won and have retained their political and economic power. Power, says the Bolshevik, is always and everywhere forged in the smithy of fire and flame; when it cools, it, like metal, becomes hard, sharp, invincible. "We are invincible; we, we, we are invincible," reiterates the worker Andronikov (*Lenin* by A. Arosev) as he recalls one of Lenin's

stirring speeches; "hand in hand . . . one common thought . . . higher and higher . . . more and more bravely. . . ."

Such are the workers, such are the Bolsheviks as we see them in the literature of those epic days. In the words of Boris Pilniak: "These fellows, in leather jackets were every mother's son of them, leather beauties; each one strong, with a shock of hair falling from under the cap down the neck; each one's skin fitted tightly to the jaws; lips were set; movements downright and firm." They were "the pick of the flabby and uncouth Russian people." Nothing could dampen their ardor. "This we know, this we want, this we have decided—and no turning back." "Function energetically," shouts Pilniak, "that's what the Bolsheviks do. . . ."

This quotation may be multiplied a hundredfold, from a hundred different writers, but essentially the picture remains unaltered: iron men "functioning energetically."

Of course, not every Bolshevik was actually a proletarian or even of proletarian origin, yet it is difficult to draw a line of demarcation between the workers and Communists of other class origin, so impregnated did the latter become with the spirit and ideology of the laboring masses. The inert elements within the working class, numerically considerable, are insignificant as factors in the colossal upheaval we are now studying. As to the vanguard of the proletariat, the creative revolutionists—these and the Bolsheviks are one and the same thing. It is in this sense that worker and Bolshevik are here used as synonymous terms.

The Bolshevik Beliakov in Efim Zozulia's *A Mere Trifle*,¹ is the typical proletarian hero in the literature

¹ *Flying Osip*, International Publishers.

of those days, as he stands alone on an empty, lighted stage, addressing a hostile mass of White Partizans, armed with knives, bombs, and loaded rifles. Faith in the triumph of the working class had become such an organic part of him, that he spoke "of the most sublime tasks of humanity with organic conviction, without the least pathos, and with an air as if they were the most practical of tasks; one needs but to bring the will to bear, and the goal is attained, and it shall be attained. . . . It was nothing to him to pass from words about the final goal of Socialism to questions about the division of land, mobilization, deserters, transportation and what-not. And as he spoke of these things, they sounded reassuringly familiar, and yet strangely novel, and, finally, so simple, within the experience and grasp of all. . . . The mottoes: 'Everything For Transportation, Everything For the Front! Everything For Reconstruction'—always and at all times, 'everything' sounded so natural on his lips, that it would have seemed strange if in his appeals he had made any reservations whatsoever." Thus is the spirit of the Revolution expressed by a Communist worker. With what pride he opens his speech: "Comrades! To our lot has fallen the great honor to be the first to start the world revolution. We were the first to free ourselves from the yoke of the Czar, the landlords, the capitalists, the generals, and the gendarmes. . . ." Pride in having been the first to start the world revolution sustained many a wavering soul during the most trying years of famine, Civil War, and industrial paralysis.

It is this mood of pride and exultation that pervades the proletarian poetry of the early, heroic years of the Revolution.

*We are the first to emerge,
And the first to advance bravely,
In closely drawn ranks,
In answer to the call of the new age. . . .*

sings the proletarian poet Sadoviev in 1918.

*We are the harbingers of the coming new beauty,
We the march, we the breath of glamorous epochs,
We the heart, we the mind of the toilers, their fairest
flower,
We World Solidarity, We Labor's mighty dream.*

It was then that Vladimir Maiakovski, lifting his giant figure above the Red Square of Moscow, roared to the marching workers:

*Beat on the street the march of rebellion,
Sweeping over the heads of the proud;
We, the flood of a second deluge,
Shall wash the world like a bursting cloud.*

*Days are a bright steed;
Years drag glum;
Our great god is Speed!
Our heart a bellowing drum!*

*What is richer than our colors?
Can we be caught by the bullet's sting?
For rifles and bayonets we have ballads;
Our gold is our voices' ring!*

*Green meadows grow,
Days burst by —
Rainbow, curve your bow!
Hurrying horses, fly!*

*See the stars in heaven above us,
Without their help our songs will thrive:
Ho! the Great Bear is demanding
We be lifted to heaven alive!*

*Sing! Drink sweet!
Our veins flow Spring!
Beat, heart, beat!
Breast of brass, ring! ²*

And the twenty-two-year-old worker V. Alexandrovski writing in 1919, is proud that

*We have raised a winged storm,
Ripped the soil with our steel. . . .*

and urges his soul to "shout louder" and to "beat against the nerves of the sleeping. . . ."

And the twenty-two-year-old Alexander Bezymenski, in his ecstasy, invades the Cosmos:

*I am Sun and Steel and Concrete,
My father—the impersonal creator of Cosmos.
In the womb of factories, beneath the heart of engines,
I was conceived and born—Yea, I am a worker!
My first movement—the swing of a hammer!
My first glance—the face of the dawn,
My first cry—the clap of thunder,
Announcing the birth of the Great October!*

Farallel to these hymns of joy and pride in the Revolution generally, there are now heard, quite as insistently, other motifs, more specifically proletarian in content, more concretely suggestive of what the Communists

² Translation by Joseph Freeman.

imagine to be the ultimate function of the working class. "We are the harbingers. . . . We, the hearts. . . . We, the mind. . . . We, world solidarity. . . . We have raised a winged storm. . . . We cannot be stopt by mountains or seas," etc., etc.—always we, us, ours. . . . Even Bezymenski's "I" is a collective "I"—"I" as the embodiment of the working class.

This aspect of the proletarian poetry of the early days of the Revolution cannot be overestimated. The most complete expression of it is found in V. Kirillov's poem *We*, written shortly after the October Revolution.

*We, the countless, redoubtable legions of Toil,
We've conquered vast spaces of oceans and lands,
Illumined great cities with suns of our making,
Fired our souls with proud flames of revolt.*

*Gone are our tears, our softness forgotten,
We banished the perfume of lilac and grass,
We exalt electricity, steam and explosives,
Motors and sirens and iron and brass. . . .*

*Our souls fused with metal, part of our engines,
We unlearned to wish for and dream of the sky.
It is here on this earth that we want to be happy,
To feed all the hungry, to hush their long cry. . . .*

*O poets and aesthetes, curse, curse the great Demos,
Kiss the fragments of yesterday on the soles of its feet,
Shed tears over ruined and shattered old temples,
While the free and the brave a new beauty shall greet.*

*Our arms, our muscles cry out for vast labors,
The pain of creation glows hot in our breast,
United, we sweeten all life with our honey,
Earth takes a new course at our mighty behest.*



A Bolshevik (*B. Kustodiev*)

*We love life, and the turbulent joys that intoxicate,
 We are hard, and no anguish our spirit can thaw.
 We—all, We—in all, We—hot flames that regenerate,
 We ourselves, to ourselves, are God, Judge, and Law.*

Besides the collective urge, the above very crudely rendered translations also reveal the new urge toward industrialization. Even the images the proletarian poet uses are drawn from modern industry—iron, steel, brass, concrete, factories, steam, sirens, engines, motors, hammers, etc. No more complaining about the heartless city, no more yearning for the halcyon days in the village. The worker takes the city and the factory to his heart—it is his, his child, his love, his pride. He dreams of greater cities, of majestic skyscrapers, and “crystal factories” bathed in a sea of light and verdure. *Look—* shouts the proletarian poet Alexei Gastev in his *We Grow out of Iron* —

*I stand among work-benches, hammers, furnaces, forges,
 and among hundreds of comrades.
 Overhead—hammered iron space.
 On either side—beams and girders.
 They rise to a height of seventy feet.
 They arch right and left.
 They meet in the cupola and with giant shoulders support the
 whole iron structure.
 They thrust upward, they are sturdy, they are strong.
 They demand yet greater strength.
 I look at them and grow straight.
 Fresh iron blood pours into my veins.
 I have grown taller
 I am growing shoulders of steel and arms immeasurably strong.
 I am one with the iron building.
 I have risen.
 My shoulders are forcing rafters, the upper beams, the roof.*

My feet remain on the ground, but my head is above the building.

I choke with the inhuman effort, but already I am shouting:

"Let me speak, comrades, let me speak!"

An iron screech drowns my words, the whole structure shakes with impatience. And I have risen yet higher, I am on a level with the chimneys.

I shall not tell a story or make a speech, I shall only shout my iron word:

*"We will conquer!"*³

Communists, workers, leather jackets—functioning energetically, inspired by cosmic visions of world revolution, collectivist society, industrial paradise—hard, determined, iron-willed workers, hewing their way to power—this is the type that stands out most vividly against the confused background of heroism and beastliness, glory and misery, ecstasy and horror of the first romantic years of military Communism and victorious war.

THE INTELLIGENTSIA

During the March Revolution, the Symbolist poet Alexander Blok published *The Twelve*, containing these vivid lines:

*A bourgeois, a lonely mourner,
His nose tucked in his ragged fur,
Stands lost and idle on the corner,
Tagged by a cringing, mangy cur.*

*The bourgeois like a hungry mongrel,—
A silent question—stands and begs.
The old world like a kinless mongrel
Stands there, its tail between its legs.*⁴

³ *Modern Russian Poetry*, by Avram Yarmolinsky and Babette Deutsch. International Publishers.

⁴ Courtesy of International Publishers.

In the poem we see the Revolution unfolding. On the crest of the wind, hurled by the blizzard, to the tune of the raging elements, flaunting a red flag, twelve red-soldiers tread a savage march through the frozen streets and the mounting snow drifts of Russia's capital. "Crack-crack-crack . . ." at Holy Russia, at "fat-rumped" Russia, at the "old world" that stands "like a kinless mongrel" with "its tail between its legs." Drunken, licentious, brutal, mighty, dynamic, inspired, the Revolution marches onward. But the bourgeois stands "a silent question . . . lost and idle," a "lonely mourner" with "nose tucked in his ragged fur." He and the old world, two mongrels, hungry, kinless. . . . And near by, the "black and bulky" angry priest, the two "ladies" who "cry and cry," and the "gently-bred pen-pushing blade" who "tosses his long hair and mutters with a mournful air: 'Renegades! Russia is dead. . . .'"

The contempt of the poet Blok for the long-haired middle-class intellectual, the devastating epithets he employs, are echoed also in one of Briusov's poems. The latter scoffs at the "fantasts" and "esthetes" who had loved originality only in books and poetic reveries, but who fled in disgust and fright when their erstwhile dreams were being incarnated "in smoke and noise." A similar attitude is revealed in most of Soviet literature—everywhere the intellectual's doubts, vacillation, lack of resolution are jeered and scorned. To the self-adulating, Narcissus-like intelligentsia such treatment sounded blasphemous. Had not the great Russian literature of the past extolled them as the "conscience of the Russian people, the flower of Russian culture, the dreamers, the poets, the prophets of the Revolution"? Had they not sacrificed? Had they not suffered? Are they to be derided and condemned now for spurning the vulgarities

and atrocities perpetrated in the name of the Revolution?
 Of course, not all middle-class intellectuals felt as Anna Akhmatova did when she wailed:

*All is sold, all is lost, all is plundered,
 Death's wing has flashed black on our sight. . . .*⁵

Apart from Lenin, Trotzki, Lunacharski, Semashko, Bukharin, and most of the Bolshevik leaders who by origin were of the middle-class, but who nevertheless had attached themselves to the revolutionary proletariat, there were men like Blok, Biely, Briusov, Veresaiev, and other members of the intelligentsia, who had all, with greater or less enthusiasm, accepted the Revolution. Blok blessed it with the presence of Christ; Briusov admonished the intelligentsia to

*Love this mass though it be vulgar,
 Love it though it savage seem;
 Love its curses, love its anger,
 But above all love its dream. . . .*⁶

Andrei Biely shouted exultedly:

*Russia,
 My Russia,
 Is a God-bearer
 Slaying a serpent. . . .*⁷

Anatoly Marienhov was thrilled that "yesterday" was being

*. . . crushed, like a dove
 By a motor
 Emerging madly from the garage. . . .*⁸

⁵ Modern Russian Poetry.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

Ilya Ehrenburg declaimed that

*Far into the night,⁹ and into the ages, the ages, we have
scattered*

The sparks of our extinguished life. . . .⁹

However, the attitude most characteristic of the intellectual during the years of revolutionary heedlessness and cruelty was that expressed in Maximilian Voloshin's lines

*But I stand alone between them,
In the roaring smoke and flame —
Both sides are dear, I pray for both. . . .*

This was the typical Hamlet attitude, most inopportune in times of revolution, when differences are sharp and unbridgeable.

The intellectuals were damned either way. For even those of them who had accepted the Revolution were, from a revolutionist's point of view, not wholly satisfactory. Instead of declaring themselves Communists, most of them had slipped off at a tangent, busying themselves with various fine-spun theories, embracing the Revolution as mystics, or nationalists, or Slavophiles, or Eurasians, or what not. In contrast to the unswerving Bolsheviks, they seemed a pitiable lot. And it is as such that we see them portrayed in Soviet literature. Weak-kneed Hamlets whose "native air of resolution" had been "sickled o'er by the pale cast of thought," superfluous people, ludicrous creatures, nonplussed mourners with their noses timorously tucked in their ragged furs.

The theme is not new. Pre-revolutionary literature was replete with Russian Hamlets: Chatski in Griboiedov's *Misfortune of Being Clever*; Eugene Onegin in

⁹ *Modern Russian Poetry.*

Pushkin's famous poem of the same name; Pechorin in Lermontov's *Hero of Our Times*, Rudin in Turgenev's novel of the same name; Niezhdanov in the same author's *Virgin Soil*, Tolstoi's Niekhludov; Dostoievski's Raskolnikov, Ivan Karamazov and Shatov; Tchekhov's Gaiev; Biely's Darialski; Andreev's *Anathema*, *He Who Gets Slapped*, etc. The contrast between the ineffectual, wavering, rationalizing Hamlet and the active, elemental, impetuous Don Quixote has been one of the favorite subjects in Russian literature. In the past the Russian writer had to invent an efficient foreigner (Gogol's Kostansheglo, Turgenev's Insarov, Goncharov's Stoltz, etc.) to offset native indolence; now it is the Russian Communist who supplies the active prototype. The present pattern is: A resolute Communist Don Quixote versus a vacillating bourgeois Hamlet.

The difference in attitude between the passive, liberal, bourgeois Hamlet and the active but practical Communist Don Quixote is excellently brought out in Vere-saiev's novel *Deadlock*, in the scene where the old revolutionist, Professor Ivan Ilyich Sartanov, has a verbal tilt with his Bolshevik visitor, Leonid.

Throwing occasional inimical glances at Leonid, Ivan Ilyich inquires:

"Well, well, how are affairs with you? The same old way, eh? Arresting? Shooting?"

Leonid smiles.

"Whomever it is necessary, we arrest and we shoot."

"And are there many necessities?"

"Yes, many. The counter-revolution hisses, and lurks, and is ready to sting at any time."

"Many, many! Yes, everyone who isn't a Bolshevik. It means the entire Russian people. You have a lot of work before you."

"We don't touch working people; them we try to convince, for we know that sooner or later they are bound to come over to our side. But we are quite unceremonious with the bourgeoisie. They won't ever join us anyhow; all discussion is superfluous; we may as well annihilate them."

"Annihilate? I don't quite understand that. You don't mean physical annihilation?"

"Indeed, even physical. If we do not get rid of them, they will join Denikin or Kolchak and fight against us."

Katia, the Professor's Menshevik daughter, is shocked.

"What are you saying, Leonid? Marxism means the removal of conditions that make the bourgeoisie possible, it does not mean the physical annihilation of the bourgeoisie. Lord, how awful!"

Leonid looked at her deprecatingly.

"W-e-l-l, my dear, you can't make revolutions with clean little hands. Above all, Marxism is dialectic; it evolves its own mode of action for each historic moment."

Leonid does not convince Ilyich and Katia. They recall that the Bolsheviki violently attacked capital punishment when it was reintroduced by Kerensky.

"Queer," Leonid shrugs his shoulders, "we seem to speak two different languages. Then, don't you see, it was a question of executing soldiers who manfully refused to participate in a criminal, imperialistic war; now it is a question of traitors who are plunging a knife into the back of the Revolution."

Biting his lips, Ivan Ilyich exclaims:

"It's you, you who have betrayed the Revolution, betrayed it hopelessly and irrevocably!"

Despite their humane talk, their sacrifices, and their acknowledged and sincere love for the "people," both

Ivan Ilyich and Katia in the end accept Wrangel and his horde.' Their hesitation resolves itself into passive counter-revolution. They are fine, lovable, and generous characters. The trouble is that they pout and sulk because revolutions are not made in a gentlemanly fashion.

The Communist girl Vera, the disowned daughter of the humane Ivan Ilyich, is more in accord with the spirit of the time. On the eve of her death, she proudly declares: "A time has come when one must not worry about the purity of his soul, about its tranquillity. . . . Nothing can be accomplished with peace, and goodness, and love. . . . Privation? Death? Ah, that were easy. . . ."

But people like Ivan Ilyich cannot subscribe to such horrid ideas. Dirt is dirt, and cruelty is cruelty, and nothing can justify dirt and cruelty. This, too, seems to be the attitude of Litovtsev, the hero in Seifullina's novel *Travellers*. Litovtsev is a typical old-fashioned populist—intellectual, addicted to beautiful abstractions and high-sounding words. He revolts against the October Revolution with all its blood and misery. "But listen, my dear," expostulates the Communist Stepan, "your glorious principles obstruct from you the living reality! But we—we live this reality, and are not frightened by shouts of dirt and treason." And another Communist adds: "Listen here, you populist intellectual, you were for a long time the telephone operator for the people. You transmitted to them wonderful ideas, sacred thoughts. But can't you see that the wires have been broken and that there is no way left of reaching the people by telephone? One must go, one must throw oneself straight into their midst. . . . The trouble is, you don't hear their living voices. . . ."

Similarly, when the idealistic Nikita, the hero of

Fedin's novel *Brothers*, assures his Communist brother Rostislav that he (Nikita) is content to "observe and listen," and that he refuses to fight against either father, or son, or brother, Rostislav answers: "But the fathers, Nikita, the fathers fight; that's the rub! . . . As to you, now—I understand you perfectly. If you're with us, you'll have to fight against father; if you join father, you'll have to fight us, your brother, me here! And if you decline to be with either side, you'll remain oscillating in the air, and won't even find a place to get a drink of water." And just as the idealistic professor Sartanov hailed the advance of the Wrangel volunteers, so did the former Socialist Revolutionist Litovtsev and the idealistic composer Nikita welcome the approach of the Whites, in the naïve belief that the Cossacks would restore order and freedom to Russia.

The fate of those members of the old intelligentsia who joined the White armies is pathetic, yet it is not half as pathetic as the fate of those who remained under the domination of the Bolsheviks. The former, together with the defeated armies, retreated helter skelter from one position to another, until they managed to make their escape into the various European and American countries where, while waiting and praying and plotting for the downfall of the Bolsheviks, they have led the unenviable lives of homeless wanderers. Still, they have been met with sympathy, understanding, and not infrequently respect. Not so those who remained in the Soviet Union; not only have they been economically ruined by the revolution, and bodily weakened by civil war and hunger, but, what is infinitely worse, they have also been wrecked morally by perennial persecution and universal contempt and suspicion. To get an inkling of this aspect in the life of the old intelligentsia, of the

utter degeneration and decay of this flower of Russian culture, one must turn to Leonid Leonov's gruesome novel *The End of a Small Person*.

Here we see the professor of paleontology Likharev, the poet Khromulin, the physician Yolkin, the former captain and warrior Titus, etc.—all reduced to a grey, teeming, hungry mass of worms writhing in the dank air of the lower depths. All of them have lost their human countenances, their purpose in life, their attachment to those "eternal values" of which they used to prate so tirelessly. Crushed by poverty and hunger, uprooted, despised, they have begun to show their meaner selves—petty, jealous, hateful creatures, without a trace of good breeding or fair play; they lie, they steal, they cheat, they pull each other's whiskers; when they come together it is a veritable Bedlam, loathsome, distressing. "Ridiculous, ridiculous," mutters Likharev as he beholds this fantastic group of have-beens. "Ten years ago, accidentally . . . someone had spilt a pail of slops over me . . . it was just as foul-smelling and disgusting as this." "Slops?" Yolkin tragically clasps his hands, "slops, do you say? A flower bed—a charming little garden! The rarest collection of aromas. Fifty years hence, when the new ones will be coming, these specimens of mine will have disappeared, will have become completely extinct. . . . People will pay money to see their little bones in the museums!"

In truth, they are curios already: the consumptive poet Khromulin who writes inane verses about the "death of Russia," the queer doctor Yolkin who labels and numbers all the queer specimens he encounters, the gentleman who asserts that every one of his acquaintances is the secret possessor of a monkey tail, the speculator who makes money but who lets his brother die of

hunger, and even Likharev himself, the central character of the novel and the most decent of the lot, once professor of paleontology now, at the age of fifty-two, himself a fossil. One is amazed how such an intellectual and moral pigmy could ever become professor of anything. Now that his gorgeous plumage has been plucked, we see him as a dull, hard, selfish, unimaginative book worm. He blandly accepts sacrifices from others without feeling in the least obligated, now from the fatuous little culture-crazed Jew Mukholovich, now from his own inexpressibly gentle and self-abnegating sister, both of whom are ready to do anything so long as the torch of "culture" remains undimmed in the hands of the "great" Likharev. But Likharev, sterile at best, is now spiritually dead; he can do nothing except talk about the opus he knows he will never write. He is miserably helpless and unadaptable.

The fact that the author made Likharev a paleontologist, a student of fossils, is symbolical. Likharev, the intellectual, was not in touch with living reality. Let revolutions rage, let people die, and groan, and go mad with pain, Professor Likharev is in dumb adoration before an antediluvian rock. Utterly impervious to the epoch-making period in which he lived, incredibly callous of the sufferings of others, Professor Likharev knew of the Revolution only in so far as it affected his personal life and comfort.

Nor is the young member of the intelligentsia, he who joins the Revolution, fights in its victorious armies, bleeds like the proletarian or peasant soldier, treated more magnanimously by the Soviet writer. He has not the balance, the solidity, the certainty that would inspire unqualified confidence in his comrades. He is generally represented as soft, unstable, volatile. We see this in the central

character of Fedin's famous novel *Cities and Years*, Andrey Startsev (the name *Startsev* is significant: it suggests debility, old age), though a Bolshevik, is a superfluous man in the Revolution. By saving the life of a counter-revolutionary aristocrat, he permits a debt of honor to interfere with the fulfilment of his revolutionary duties. He hesitates, he plays a double rôle, the result is complete psychological disintegration and suicide.

Similarly one of the main characters in Fadeev's *Nineteen*, the student Mechik, is afflicted with all the ailments of the typical intelligent. Just as Andrey Startsev is the direct antithesis to the Communist Kurt, so is Mechik the direct opposite of the strong, earthy, determined, partizan fighters—Morozka, Dubov, Baklanov. Mechik is a soft, unstable, good-for-nothing intellectual, a petty and superfluous personality. Self-conscious, analytical, morbidly sensitive, egotistical, weak, he does not dare even to take the woman he craves and who repeatedly offers herself to him. He cannot make friends among the men. Though he has joined the detachment voluntarily and has been seriously wounded in battle, he remains an utter stranger in an alien world. Toward the end of the novel, when the fate of the whole detachment depends on his steadfastness and loyalty, he turns coward. Mechik's behavior when he comes to realize what he has done is interesting. He falls into terrible despair, in a frenzy he tears his hair: "O-o-o ——— what have I done, how could I ever do such a thing, I who am so good, so honest, I who never wished ill to anyone, how did I ever do such a thing!" And the more his detestable behavior stares him in the face, the better, the purer, the nobler his former self seems to him. He is tormented "not by the realization that dozens of people who had entrusted their lives to him had perished, but by the thought that

this indelible blotch on his conscience was contradicting everything good and pure he imagined in himself." Fascinated and horrified he stared at his pistol, but soon he came to realize that "he never would or could kill himself, for more than anything in this world he loved himself—his white, soiled, feeble hand, his whining voice, his sufferings, his actions, even the most repellent." Gradually, however, Mechik becomes reconciled to his fate. He stops his moaning and crying. The past begins to appear to him as a terrible nightmare. "I do not wish to endure it any longer," the sober thought flashes through his mind with unexpected directness; and he begins to pity himself. "I cannot stand it any longer, I cannot endure this mean, inhuman, terrible existence. . . . I will go back to the city, I can do nothing else now." Thinking thus, Mechik tries to make it appear to himself that it is a matter of regrettable necessity, yet deep in his heart it is difficult for him to repress a feeling of secret joy, marred by shame and the fear that he may not manage to escape to the city after all. . . . "But suppose the Whites are in the way? . . . Well, what's the difference? . . ." Thus, in addition to being a coward, the student Mechik turns traitor.

In striking contrast with many West-European and American war novels, where the conflict between the intellectual and the mass is described from the intellectual's point of view, the Soviet novel usually adopts the viewpoint of the worker and peasant soldier. But Fadeev is too scrupulous an artist not to suggest some justification for the student's delinquencies. To make Mechik's portrait authentic, to account for the apparently incredible change from an idealistic youth to a pusillanimous creature and traitor, he indicates that the fault is not wholly with the intellectual. From his very first ap-

pearance among the men, Mechik is looked at askance, persecuted, jeered. His gentility, his white hands, his carrying about of his girl's portrait, his inability to take care of his horse, his blushing and his futility irritate the rough-hewn men; this in turn starts in him a train of psychological reactions which culminate in cowardice and treason. Softness, gentility, sensitiveness are the bane of the intellectual's existence; it is this that renders him utterly useless in the exigencies of a hard-boiled epoch.

How unforgettably Isaac Babel illustrates this in his little master-piece *The Death of Dolgushev*. The story is told by an educated bespectacled fellow, a typically irresolute intellectual, attached to the famous Budienny Cavalry Regiment on the Polish front:

The man who sat on the road side was Dolgushev, the telephone operator. His legs spread wide apart, he stared straight at us.

"Listen here," said Dolgushev when we came closer to him, "I'm going to die. Understand?"

"I understand," answered Grishchuk, halting his horse.

"You must waste a bullet on me," said Dolgushev severely.

He sat leaning against a tree. His boots sprawled out in opposite directions. Without shifting his eyes from me, he cautiously turned up his shirt. His belly was ripped open, the intestines were creeping down to his knees; one could see his heart beat.

"The Polaks will come and make sport. Here are my papers . . . you'll write to my mother, what and how. . . ."

"No," I mumbled in a choked voice, and dug the spurs into my horse.

Dolgushev stretched his blue palms on the ground and examined them incredulously.

"You're running away," he muttered, his body drooping, "run, you reptile. . . ."

A sweat broke out all over my body. The machine guns were crackling with increasing rapidity, with hysterical persistence. Circled by the halo of the setting sun, Afonka Bida was galloping in our direction.

"We're lickin' 'em bit by bit," he shouted gayly. "What's going on here?"

I pointed to Dolgushev and rode off.

Their conversation was brief. I did not hear the words. Dolgushev handed the corporal his documents. Afonka shoved them in his boot top, then fired into Dolgushev's mouth.

"Afonka," said I smiling pitifully as I rode over to the Cossack, "You see, I couldn't. . . ."

"B—beat it," he said, growing pale, "I'll kill you! You bespectacled devils, you pity us fellows as cats pity mice. . . ."

He raised the trigger. I rode off quietly, without turning, feeling cold and death in my back.

"Stop that," shouted Grishchuk, as he grabbed Afonka's arm. "Stop that nonsense."

"The poor fish," shouted Afonka, "I'll get him yet."

The scene is in a sense symbolic.

"No," said the finicky intellectual, unable to sacrifice the "purity" of his soul. "Reptile," "poor fish," hurled back the enraged masses. Thus has the Revolution dethroned the once glorious Hamlets. Instead we have "reptiles," "poor fish," pusillanimous creatures, hungry mongrels, useless flotsam and jetsam caught in the whirlpool of a mighty revolution. . . .

THE PEASANTS

The peasant hero is not new in Russian song and story. Since times immemorial the Russians have been an agricultural people. Their earliest folk-songs and epics, proverbs and tales reflect the life and aspirations, the dreams and frustrations of the rustic. The mightiest

and most beloved hero of the Russian *byliny* (epic song) is Ilia Mourometz—a peasant. Mikula Selianinovich, another mighty *bogatyr* extolled in Russian folk poetry, is a splendid embodiment of the soil-tiller's ideology. The saints most popular in the village, to whom most prayers were offered and most hymns chanted, were those who took the greatest interest in the lot of the peasant, bringing sunshine and bestowing showers, protecting cattle and raising crops. The two most popular figures in later folk-song were Stenka Razin and Yemelian Pugachev, two famous Cossack peasants who had led the wide-spread peasant rebellions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In formal literature, however, the peasant made his appearance rather late. We do not find him in the works of either the eighteenth century Classicists or the nineteenth century Romanticists. The latter did at times turn to peasant lore for legendary themes (Pushkin, Gogol, in their romantic moods), but this was rare. Not until the appearance of Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches* was the peasant type introduced into Russian letters. Turgenev was followed by Aksakov, Tolstoi, Gregorovich, Nekrasov, Gleb Uspenski, and others, all of whom tended to sentimentalize, idealize, and well-nigh canonize the *muzhik*. The Slavophiles and reactionaries, disdainful of Western influences and, as agrarian aristocrats, apprehensive of the evolving urban civilization, extolled the village as the store-house of all that was wholesome, religious, and solid in Russia, and the peasant as the noble carrier of the purest ideals of the ancient Slav. The Westerners and liberals, chafing at serfdom as an obstacle in Russia's industrial development, extolled the peasant and wept over his sorrows, in an effort to con-

vince the world that the poor *muzhik* was deserving of a happier lot.

The abolition of serfdom accelerated the class differentiation of the lower stratum of Russian society and resulted in the emergence of the proletariat as a progressive factor in Russian life. The *muzhik* was dethroned. The new writers, mostly members of the urban middle and lower classes, men like Tchekhov and Gorki, began to harp on the unmitigated backwardness, ignorance, and brutality of the village, on the utter stupidity, servility, and pettiness of the *muzhik*. Changed economic and social conditions crystallized in changed literary patterns.

The World War, the Revolution, Communism, the civil war, the New Economic Policy have brought about profound changes, economic and social, political and cultural, in rural Russia, and these changes in turn have resulted in new peasant heroes in life and new peasant stencils in fiction.

Like all revolutions, the Russian Revolution has been dialectic, involving negation as well as affirmation, destruction as well as creation, anguish as well as glory. In the early stages the accent was implacably placed on destruction. Old economic forms, social traditions, revered customs, sacrosanct relations, religious prepossessions, individual habits—everything was cracking, breaking, collapsing. Passions were unleashed. The old and the new were in mortal combat. The old resisted, resisted stubbornly, desperately, savagely—no matter whether represented by a highly cultivated bourgeois or by an almost primitive peasant.

It is the peasant, in fact, who has ultimately proved the more fractious and obdurate. The intelligentsia, an educated, Europeanized, but insignificant minority, not deeply rooted in Russian life, did not present so serious

a problem. A delicate flower, isolated and impotent, it was easily crushed under the hob-nailed boots of the workers and peasants. The village, however, was different—inert, illiterate, bigoted; at times touchingly human; when aroused, primitively brutal—the village, the peasant were Russia. Poor, overtaxed, his sons and brothers slaughtered on battlefields, all the peasant hankered for was land and peace. His urge was elemental, its manifestation even more so. He stuck his bayonet into the ground and hurried to his village, to kill or drive away the landlord, burn the estate, seize the land. This accomplished, he was ready to lapse back into his age-long torpor. For the peasant was not political, and, so long as he was not interfered with, he cared little as to who was in power and what the city fellows intended to do now that the Czar had been overthrown. Mass desertions from the front and wholesale seizures of land and stock from the landlords had begun months before the Bolsheviks came into power. The Provisional Government had tried futilely to turn the tide with a broomstick. When the Bolsheviks seized control, they put their approval upon a process already under way.

In his own shrewd way, however, the peasant began to make distinctions between what were actually synonymous terms—Bolsheviki and Communists. Bolsheviks to him were those who stood for peace and the confiscation of land; Communists, those who used new-fangled words, attacked the Orthodox Church, the holy saints, the marriage rites, declared woman the equal of man, hailed the poorest peasant as the salt of the earth. There were no Communists in the village, except for a desultory soldier or two who had come back from the Great War affected by the attitudes and phrases of the revolutionary proletariat, or an occasional factory worker

thrown out of employment and forced back to the village. These citified individuals were the revolutionary enzymes most cordially hated by the wealthier peasants. The homogeneous village population began to reveal clear-cut differentiations, economic and ideological; these generated emotional outbursts and physical strife.

The logic of events prevented the village from sinking back into immobility. The city needed bread; the peasant was loath to part with his grain unless he got immediate and tangible returns either in money that would have real purchasing power or in needed industrial products. But the city, in the throes of revolution and civil war, had nothing to give. Industry, almost paralyzed before the Revolution, was now virtually at a standstill. The requisitioning expeditions sent out by the city met with the stiffest opposition. With the exception of the poorest ones who had nothing to give and little to fear, the peasants shirked their obligations to the State. Freedom to them meant no responsibility, no taxes, no duties. Furthermore, in the South, the Cossacks, henchmen of the old régime, fearing that they might lose the many privileges granted to them by the Czar, rose in arms against the proletarian dictatorship. Oppositional nuclei began to attract these elements. The Kolchaks, the Denikins and the Wrangels, the Czechoslovaks, the Poles, the Allies and the Germans became gravitational centers of counter-revolution. The disgruntled elements in the village welcomed the advance of the Czarist generals who were appealing to old loyalties—to religion, to nationalism. "Kill the Jews and the Communists and save the Fatherland," was one of the most potent of slogans. The spectre of murder, rapine, and arson stalked across the land—in remote Siberia, in arid Turkestan, in the mountainous regions of the

Caucasus, along the endless plains of the Ukraine, in the arctic cold of Archangel.

Before long the peasant discovered that the White generals, officers, and Junker troops were far from being his friends. Wherever they came there was revelry, debauchery and savage retribution. In their wake the former landlord, the Czarist bureaucrat, and the foreigner loomed large and ominous. Many of the peasants had a violent revulsion of feeling. All over Russia, individual villages, districts, entire regions formed partisan (guerrilla) troops which retired into the woods and the Steppes and conducted campaigns of primitive fighting against the enemy. "The Ivans, and Antons, and Serg-eyes; the Marias, and Elizavetas and Katerinas were torn away from the plough, from life at the plough, their heads were filled with a dreadful mélange in which Karl Marx was married to Jack London; almost all of them disappeared in the Red Army to thrash the Whites, and only those who were strongest survived," writes Pilniak.

The Ivans and Marias mentioned by Pilniak are the new protagonists in the peasant drama. "New Jack London men and women," Pilniak calls them—lurid, mighty, vindictive, triumphant. Soviet literature of this period glows with the heroism of these modern Mikula Selianinoviches and Ilia Mourometztes, the new Stenka Razins and Yemelian Pugachevs.

Recall Babel's incomparable Afonka Bida as he shoots into the mouth of his wounded comrade. What a magnificent figure! Or take the Kurdiukovs in Babel's story, *The Letter*.¹⁰ What naïve cruelty, what colossal heroism, what grotesque Communism! In the same breath the

¹⁰ This story appears in *Red Cavalry* by Isaac Babel. It can be obtained in English in *Azure Cities*, a collection of Soviet stories issued by International Publishers.

young Kurdiukov tenderly implores his mother to wash the ailing leg of his horse and matter-of-factly informs her that his father, a White, had killed one of the three brothers, and that Senka, one of the surviving brothers, a Bolshevik, had killed the father. He writes:

But just as soon as Senka got hold of daddy he began to whip daddy and had all the soldiers stand at attention in the yard according to military order. And then Senka threw water on daddy Timofey Rodionich's beard, and the dye came off the beard. And Senka asked Timofey Rodionich:

"Do you feel well, daddy, in my hands?"

"No," said daddy, "I feel bad."

Then Senka asked:

"And did Fedya, when you cut him up, feel well in your hands?"

"No," said daddy "Fedya felt bad."

Then Senka asked:

"And did you think, daddy, that you would feel bad too?"

"No," said daddy, "I did not think I'd feel bad."

Then Senka turned to the crowd and said:

"And I think that if ever I fall into your hands there will be no mercy for me. And now, daddy, we'll put an end to you."

And Timofey Rodionich began to swear at Senka and his mother and the mother of the Lord and to beat Senka's mug. And Senka sent me away from the yard, so that I can't, my dear mother, Yevdokia Fyodorovna, describe to you how they ended daddy, because I was sent away.

This is the peasant—direct, primitive, brutal. The bespectacled intellectual would cough and hem, whine and whimper, and at the end inevitably fail. Not so the peasant: he is hewn of one piece—an unshakable monolith, elemental, huge, cumbersome, impregnable. Such are the partisan heroes in Soviet literature—Kozhukh

in Serafimovich's *Iron Stream*, Chapaiev in Furmanov's epic by the same name, Morozka in Fadeyev's *Nineteen*, Pavel and Semyon in Leonov's *Badgers*, the many partisan heroes in Ivanov's novels and short stories, and so on without end. These peasants are not Communists in the full sense. They know little of Lenin and nothing but a distortion of Karl Marx's name. Their ideas of Communism are naïve, and often absurd. Yet, born leaders, instinctive organizers, these modern Stenka Razins and Pugachevs had a great deal to do with the final victory of the Bolsheviks.

Less spectacular than the epic heroes of the partisan wars, but, in view of recent developments, of incalculably greater importance, are the *dramatis personae* in the gruesome cultural and economic struggle within the village.

"Since the year 1917," exults Seifullina, "the city has whipped the village into a whirl. Everything new, new, new. Unfamiliar words, like nails, driven into soft brains used to the humdrum and the commonplace. Ways of life, terrifying by their novelty, swooping down in incessant decrees. Everything superannuated, condemned to wreckage. True, life in the past had been cruel, enslaving, still it was regular, measured, confirmed by the experience of many generations. Even when the smooth tenor of life was occasionally ruffled by fights and blood-letting, by drunken arson and death, those very disturbances were usual, comprehensible. . . . Drunken brawls on a holiday, despite their brutality and savagery, had been habitual and not terrifying. Does not the river at times overflow its banks, menace, destroy, only to subside once more into somnambulant bliss? It is different now: the most terrible element—human blood—has been stirred. How and when will it be appeased?"

One of the most authentic pictures of the "bewildered" village and of the various peasant types in the early period of the Revolution from 1917 to 1919, is given in Seifullina's excellent story *Humus*. Here the main hero is the *muzhik* Sofron, a World War veteran. Before the Revolution, "he had practically no land. The bit of land he did have was worked by his woman and his older brats, and was disgraceful to look at. He was a drunkard and would gallivant about the village yards or snore by a fence. He never had the peasant's industry. In the village he was always an alien." Alongside of him there are other representatives of the village poor. There is Savroska the horse-thief, "his head twisted to one side, his neck having been injured when the entire village had beat him almost to death for stealing horses." There is Redkin, whose "insides had been rotted away" while he was vainly trying to "improve his condition." "I have nine hungry mouths," shouts Redkin as he demands that all the land be taken over by the Commune, "my kids, though tiny, would be ready to plough the land with their teeth. But where is the land? Where have I land? Where? Where? My brother was killed in the War—does his family have land?" Savroska, too, avenges himself for his sufferings. "He is paying back all right! The other day he strutted into the Church, swore at everyone there, exposed the most shameful part of his body, and railed at God in language one dare not repeat even in one's thoughts."

Besides Sofron, Savroska, and Redkin, Seifullina presents a host of others—landless peasants, farm hands, drifters, and similar village types. Ugly and repulsive though these enraged barbarians are, the author endeavors to show that even in their cruelty and excesses there is a deep, ineluctable truth. These outcasts and

vagabonds, these loafers and blackguards had been driven to drinking, and stealing, and blaspheming by the utter hopelessness of their lives. What was the use of being industrious, of trying to "improve one's condition," if one's insides were "rotted away" in the attempt? Little wonder they are such ardent disciples of Bolshevism now! Little wonder that at the village meeting they clamor so loudly for land!

The rich peasants object. Grave, dignified, with venerable, carefully combed beards, long cloaks, and heavy leather boots, they look superciliously at the shabby and barefooted brigade. They first invoke the spirit of Christ and the Holy Writ, but are hooted down. The crowd looks menacing, and Kocherin, the richest peasant, resorts to cunning and diplomacy:

"As regards the Bolshevik teaching," says he, "we have nothing against it. We, too, are opposed to war; as the Bible says: *Thou shalt not kill*. Also in accordance with the Holy Writ, we, too, feel that we must help raise the poor. But, friends, man's teaching is not God's teaching; it always carries with it the vexations of our sins. To seize, to grab is wrong, evil. And, by the way, what does it mean to seize our lands? We did not get it for nothing. All this must be talked over in peace, in quiet, and in friendliness. I did become rather interested in the Bolshevik teaching, I even made a trip to the town for that purpose. I have learned that their chief master was Karlo Marksov. W-e-l-l, he was not a Russian, you see, and he had written down his teaching in a foreign tongue. The right thing to do is to find out definitely the real truth about Marksov's writing. The Russian people are credulous. We swallow what is handed to us. Discrimination is not in our habit. We are weak when it comes to education and alien tongues. Even if we did get hold of the real foreign original, could we tell what Lenin has added on to it? We must first learn to understand foreign tongues, and then check up the

Russian writings with the foreign original. There will be plenty of time then to chatter about 'proletarians of all lands.' In such a matter as politics, one must get down to the very bottom. To understand these things, we must have time, reliable people, yes—and peace, and quiet; not just like that, headlong under a new yoke. . . .”

Of course, this oily talk has only an irritating affect. The rich peasants are jostled out of the meeting room. Sofron proceeds to enroll the entire poor population into the Communist Party. The procedure is a travesty. Sofron has not the faintest conception of party principles and party organization; he enrolls by the family—husband, wife, and children—even infants. “Hey, there, the poor of the village, move along! Those who do not sign up, get no land!” The village librarian expostulates: “But, citizens, this is wrong; this is not the way to join a political party!” For such pedantry, this intellectual is thrown out. “Brutes, dumb rabble!” he mutters in disgust. This pleasant interlude over, the enrollment goes merrily on, to the accompaniment of vulgar jests and hilarious horse-play. Sofron is elated when he later hands the list to the city Commissar—158 Bolsheviks! The Commissar almost jumps for joy—what success!

Gradually, Sofron, the former village drunkard, unfolds his activities. He calls meetings; he makes the people, the rich peasants too, sing the Internationale; he organizes a revolutionary guard; he directs the formation of the village Commune and the requisitions of the landlord's farm stock and agricultural machinery; he confiscates, for the benefit of the village, a rich private library—in short, to borrow a phrase from Pilniak, he “functions energetically.”

A curious and, no doubt, typical sidelight on the

muzhik's character is Seifullina's description of Sofron's relations with the village teacher and the village doctor. The uncouth peasant is intrigued by the cleanliness, decency, gentility of the young woman who is the village teacher. She talks to him of books, she does not disdain his company; she is polite and considerate, yet always aloof and unapproachable. Sofron is flattered and touched, and finally falls in love with her. But when he discovers that this aloof lady has a love tryst with the city instructor, he becomes furious. So it is all a pretense! So she is not quite so pure as she makes believe! So she is bourgeois after all! His ideal shattered, Sofron is mad with rage; he attacks the teacher, subjects her to many indignities, and then rapes her. With regard to the doctor, Sofron's behaviour is even more dastardly. The newly arrived doctor has put up a lightning rod on the roof of his house. Sofron, not knowing the use of a lightning rod, suspects the doctor of being in secret communication with the counter-revolutionary Cossacks, and kills him. Seifullina certainly does not spare violent colors when she paints the village Bolshevik. Furthermore, by introducing the episodes with the librarian, the teacher, and the doctor, she makes the reader realize the incredible distrust and cruelty with which the aroused peasantry treated the intelligentsia.

Sofron's end is pathetic. When the Cossacks break into the village, he and his aides pay heavily for their Bolshevik sins. The rich peasants, whose lands and implements had been partly socialized, receive the Cossacks with open arms. The Bolshevik ringleaders are apprehended and tied with heavy ropes. The kulaks¹¹ take their revenge. "Well, Sofron Artamonovich," jeers the

¹¹ Term given to the wealthiest peasants.

kulak Zhiganov, "what about your Commune? What about the implements you have taken away?" He spits straight into Sofron's face, and strikes his tough fist right into Sofron's eye. Sofron roars so that the countryside resounds with his cries. Zhiganov flings him to the ground and stamps with heavy boots on his belly: "This is for my plow! This is for my house! This is for my property! This is your pay!" Sofron faints. They throw cold water over him, and beat him again. Sofron is killed, his wife's abdomen ripped open, her unborn infant cast to the pigs. The other leaders receive similar punishment. The first harbingers of the great upheaval, they are slaughtered, their bodies dismembered, their remains thrown out to fertilize the boundless plains of a frenzied land.

This motif is one of the most recurrent in early Soviet literature. The old, the staid, the stolid, the antiquated, the obsolete versus the new, the mobile, the dynamic, the fresh, the revolutionary. The dialectic of life makes the dialectic of art. In the village the contrasts are most glaring, the conflicts most dramatic.

The young are impudent and immoral. They know everything, they understand everything. They spurn God and rail at his Church, they neither marry nor bury like honest Christians. "You are not my son!" grumbles Seifullina's Old Woman to her Bolshevik son. "I will not burden my soul with the sin of having a son who is a blasphemer. Go where you will. And don't come back while we're alive."

"Stop this nonsense, mother," says Neverov's young peasant, Andron the Shiftless,¹² who has absorbed a surface knowledge in the Red Army. "Man has come from a monkey."

¹² *Andron the Shiftless* by Alexander Neverov.

And when Andron's father, enraged, leaps at his son, asking, "In what holy books have you read that?" the following dialogue takes place:

"You, pop, are illiterate."

"Does this mean then, that you don't believe in the Holy Church?"

"Bah! The Church is simply a theatre for religious shows. I myself can play any rôle, if you please."

The father pants with rage, he gulps down some *vodka* to keep up his nerve.

"Who has brought you into this world?"

"Nature."

"What kind of nature?"

Andron notices his father roll up his sleeves; he laughs:

"Quit that, old man, or I'll wallop you!"

"What right have you to strike your own father?"

"I wouldn't do it to mother. But if you keep on waving your fists, I'll wallop you, right or no right."

"You son of a bitch!"

Andron grabs him by the hand:

"Now, don't be funny. I won't let you strike me. I'll tie you up in a minute. . . ."

Andron is a thorn in the side of his family. "To break my son, I have no strength," his father mutters lugubriously; "to break myself, I'm ashamed before people." His son's defiant strut, his jingling spurs, and red blouse, his tilted cap with a red star, his curled mustache, his alien words, his blasphemous remarks—"Man has come from a monkey," "I don't recognize religious marriages," "I consider woman a comrade," "we must organize a Commune," etc., fill the old man's soul with bitterness and grief.

The whole village is upset by Andron and his ad-

herents. His influence is particularly felt among the young. The elders complain: "Our sons do not obey, the girls do not obey. " They go to bed with sweethearts unmarried, they rise without saying their prayers. . . ." Moreover, Andron shuts down the church, drives out the priest, taxes the rich, confiscates their property. As a result, when the Whites sweep into the village, most of Andron's supporters meet with the fate of Sofron. Andron is wounded, his father's house is burned. Humus again, more fertilizer for the benefit of the "new sower" who will "roam the new fields."

NEP AND THE COMMUNISTS

With the Poles swept out of the Ukraine and the last remnants of the White forces under Wrangel crushed in the Crimea, with the liberation of the various regions necessary to the economic life of Russia, the Revolution entered on a new phase. In August, 1921, the Soviet Government inaugurated the New Economic Policy (NEP). One of the immediate effects of removing restrictions on private trading was the recrudescence of the middle class. Out of the decimated remnants of the old bourgeoisie a host of speculators and tradesmen—Nepmen—invaded the stage. There followed a brief Saturnalia, quickly repressed by the Communists.

The private trader, the smuggler, the speculator existed, of course, before the introduction of the New Economic Policy. We find this type depicted even in pre-NEP literature. We see it, for instance, in Yuri Libidinski's novel *A Week*, which deals with the spring days of 1921; *i.e.*, the period just before the New Economic Policy was embodied in a decree.

"At one railway station," says the Communist girl

Anyuta in that novel, "there was a sort of big staircase, and from top to bottom it was covered with people. Men, women, children lying on the steps, together with their pitiable dirty belongings, and all their faces thin spiders' webs of wrinkles of care and misery, under a veil of many days' dirt. And close by in the buffet there was a speculator eating cakes while a hungry homeless little boy watched his mouth greedily. . . . And down that terrible staircase, stepping carefully, squeamishly—squeamishly is the word—came some smart Commissar or other with a Communist star glittering on his breast, and he put down his lacquered boots so carefully among those weary, dirty bodies, and came down and ate cakes with the speculator. . . . Suddenly the idea dawned on me that it was so in ancient Rome, in Judea at the time of Christ, in the Middle Ages and not long ago under Capitalism. And I felt so wretched. . . . I felt I should like to lie on that staircase, beside those people, be covered with their everlasting dirt, take their lice on my body, and lie there till I died, moving now and then to make way for polished boots. . . ."

Naturally, the disgust with the speculator and the fear of his corrosive influence even on the Communists was bound to increase a thousand-fold with the introduction of the NEP. The young Bolshevik girl Polia in Feodor Gladkov's novel *Cement*¹³ says:

"I can't endure it because I can neither understand nor justify it. . . . We have destroyed and we have suffered . . . a sea of blood, famine. And suddenly—the past arises again with joyful sound. And I don't know where the nightmare is: in those years of blood, misery, sacrifice, or in this bacchanalia of rich shop win-

¹³ International Publishers.

dows and drunken cafés. What was the good of mountains of corpses. . . . Was it that blackguards and vampires should again enjoy all the good things of life and get fat by robbery?"

"We are going to be subjected to a dreadful trial," says another Communist in the same novel, "worse than civil war, ruin, famine and blockade. We're in the presence of a hidden foe who is not going to shoot us, but will spread before us all the charms and temptations of capitalist business. . . . The petty trader is crawling out of his hole. He is beginning to get fat and re-incarnates in various forms. For instance, he is trying to insinuate himself in our own ranks, behind a solid barricade of revolutionary phrases, with all the attributes of bolshevik valor. Markets, cafés, shop windows, delicacies, home comforts, and alcohol. . . . That's something we should be afraid of."

Certain aspects of the period immediately following the introduction of the NEP are painted in dark colors by Ilya Ehrenburg in his picturesque novel *Rvatch* (*The Racketeer*), published in 1925. Here we see how Mikhail Lykov, the mischievous, abandoned, egotistical, thoroughly unprincipled, appallingly libidinous hero of the story manages to insinuate himself into the Party. During the days of military Communism and civil war, he performs deeds of valor and self-sacrifice; later, during the hectic period of post-war speculation and chicanery, he degenerates into a grab-all, get-rich-quick beast of prey; finally, when his activities become too flagrant, he is arrested by the GPU and is shot as a speculator and traitor.

It is significant that irrespective of the political point of view of the author, the bourgeois is always depicted as an enemy of the Soviet Republic, or at any rate, not

a well-wisher. A typical example is Pikus, the provincial Jewish storekeeper in Alexei Tolstoi's story *Azure Cities*. "Tell me," he asks in a counter-revolutionary whisper, "what's going on in Moscow? How about the NEP? They say there is no hope. This is a terrible time. We are rolling into an abyss. I have reached such a nervous state that I howl in my sleep."

In the same story we also make the acquaintance of Sashok Zhigalev, "the son of a wholesale wheat-dealer," an utterly depraved, vulgar, conceited youth.

A type very similar to this Sashok is the student Korsuntsiev in the *Diary of a Communist Undergraduate*, by N. Ogniev.¹⁴ "I suppose you believe that dancing is unworthy of a revolutionary," Korsuntsiev remarks to his puritanical Communist friend. "This isn't the time to bother about such things. The time of military Communism is over. We're living in the NEP age. We've got to learn commerce among other things. So while we're at it, why not learn dancing, too? It's good for your soul to enjoy yourself, and there's no reason why we should all lead a monastic life. Besides it offers exceptional opportunities for getting in closer touch with girls. Dancing simply makes girls—melt!" Korsuntsev doesn't, however, think always of foxtrots and hilarity. At times, particularly after a show and a few vodkas, he becomes mellow and lyrical. Then his imagination carries him off into a world of ineffable bourgeois felicity. "So far as I'm concerned," he confides, "I'm going to get well-married as soon as I am through the university. I'll have a cosy, quiet little home, a flat with at least three rooms, and some decent furniture—and I'll live to my heart's content."

¹⁴ Published by Brewer and Warren.

Korsuntsev is cynical. Officially, he is a Communist; clandestinely, however, he speculates in sugar and carries on all kinds of amatory intrigues with bourgeois girls such as the perfumed Zizi. "Real life," he philosophizes, "is different from Communist meetings. . . . It does not care a damn for all your ideology."

Of especial interest in this connection, are the different attitudes, depending on their class orientation, revealed by the various authors treating this post-NEP period. Writers like Ehrenburg, Alexei Tolstoi, Zoshchenko, Romanov, etc., see frock-coats, tips, servants, lip-stick, foxtrots, gambling, philistine pleasures, Main Street occupations, rubber plants, geraniums, canaries, sunflower seeds, yellow family portraits, petty gossip, petty savings, petty pride, obsequiousness, sycophancy, wire-pulling, dirt, meanness, and squalor still rampant all over Russia. According to them, the past has not even begun to disappear. Provincial Russia, "fat-rumped Russia," has been only slightly ruffled by the mighty Revolution. It has merely become more vulgar, more callous, more cynical. It is with a kind of masochistic pleasure that these middle-class writers flagellate the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois essence of these writers reveals itself in negation, scepticism, irony, irrationalism, and anti-social individualism. Communism is not denounced; instead these authors lament the "failure" of the Communist ideal. "Where are the dreams of yesteryear?" the middle-class writers wail. Gone, vanished. . . . "Our" dream has turned into a nightmare; "our" heroes into Nepman, speculators, bureaucrats. Human nature, depraved, selfish, possessive, has won a rueful victory. The Communist remonstrates that the fellow travellers' tears are idle, their lamentations vain, that although there is an element of danger the Communists haven't been de-

feated; on the contrary, they are hale and hearty and fight on vigorously. But these writers have come to witness a tragedy and will not be robbed of their pleasure of weeping; they are resolved to remain disconsolate. There is, of course, a certain objective basis for their attitude; but observe the difference between Gladkov's and Ehrenburg's reactions to the same situation. The proletarian Gladkov, as we have seen in the passages quoted from *Cement*, is fully aware of the possibly perilous consequences of the NEP; yet his emphasis is wholly on the side of proletarian victory; he prefers to strike the major note; he is confidently Communist. The middle-class writer Ehrenburg, on the other hand, though vaguely and coldly aware of Communist achievement (take for instance the inanimate and covertly inimical portrait of Artem Lykov, the Communist), prefers to emphasize catastrophic results of the NEP, prefers to strike a minor, sceptical, defeatist chord. Each one stresses what he is predisposed to stress.

RECONSTRUCTION AND THE FACTORY WORKER

In Russia one constantly hears such expressions as "economic front," "political front," "cultural front," "domestic front [meaning the problems of a new family and new marital relations]." In most of the significant novels and stories of the last few years we have the worker again "functioning energetically" on the various peace "fronts." One of the most disheartening facts confronting the active Communist workers in their attempt to start the wheels of industry going, was the obtuseness, the incredulousness of many of the less intelligent workers as well as of some of the most highly skilled workers.

Indeed, it seemed that the Communists had been caught in a deadly dilemma—on one hand the peasant refused to part with his grain unless he got supplies of manufactured products in return; on the other, many of the workers refused to work unless they were given enough food. Neither side was inclined to be reasonable. But while force could be applied, temporarily at least, to the peasant, it would be little short of suicide to apply force to the obstreperous workers in the mills and the factories. The latter had to be humored, and cajoled, and persuaded. Not infrequently it was the irresistible, all-consuming flame of one or two individuals in a factory that swayed a whole mass of unwilling, recalcitrant workers to resume work. It is a scene of this sort that we behold in Liashko's *The Song of the Chains*.

"The factory was filled all winter with the glow of something evil, something that infused the souls of all with doubt, disappointment, apathy. . . . And one day, in the spring, there was an unusual sob of the siren, the lathes stopped, the iron was silenced. The workmen moved in a flood to the yard, toward the scaffold from which speakers addressed them, demanded to see the leaders, the representatives of the Soviet, and raised cries at them.

" 'What are you doing with us? . . . What are we working for?'

" 'Where is the bread? . . . Why did you feed us on promises?'

" 'You put your hands on everything, but you can't do anything yourselves.'

"Wrath and pain flowed in their eyes, drew their fists together,—made kindling wood of their words, and rattled wildly in their voices. They cursed, they re-

proached each other, they searched for the guilty ones—and they could not find them.”¹⁵

A like situation is depicted in Marietta Shaginian's *Three Looms*, where the women workers in the Leningrad textile mills refused to tend three instead of the usual two looms. “The women looked angry,” relates the author. “Their faces were red, their eyes gleamed. It was clear as two and two is four that . . . they did not want to work on three looms, that they would not be moved by eloquent reasons, and that in the end they would vote solidly against the proposition.” “We were met by a hail of such abuse,” continues the author, “that my unaccustomed soul turned rabbit.” Still, it is typical that in both these stories the workers go back to work. Significantly, too, in each case, the resumption of work is due to the inspiring speech of an old worker. These old workers had suffered too much and too long under the old régime. Nothing could be worse than the past. The burden of their argument is: “There is no going backward. . . . We've got to do our work ourselves. . . .”

In George Nikiforov's *Ivan Brynda*, the old weaver, torn away from his accustomed work and from his factory where he had worked for thirty-five years, would sacrifice his profitable employment with the Nepman and a great deal more, if he could once more rise at six o'clock in the morning and trot along the familiar path he had walked for thirty years in obedience to the call of the whistle. Still, for all his love of the factory, the mere thought of the past fills him with horror. When the old basket-maker speaks regretfully of the good old days, Brynda exclaims: “I was born in the factory; I know.

¹⁵ *Azure Cities*, International Publishers, New York.

It was so that a body could not even breathe freely. They made it pretty stiff for you, the devil take them. The foreman used to punch me in the face. No, sir, I won't forget that. I'd rather croak than crawl back under that same old yoke again." In the last chapter Nikiforov describes Brynda's joy when, upon returning to his native city, he once more hears the shrill blowing of the factory whistle.

The worker's love for the factory, the machine, the process of production is one of the dominant motifs in proletarian literature. Even the highly skilled workers, men who had prospered under the old régime, and who looked disdainfully on the new order and the new management, could not help being thrilled at the re-starting of the factories. This type of worker is excellently portrayed in Semyonov's novel *Natalia Tarpova*. The old metal worker, Natalia's father, though completely scandalized by the new spirit in the factory, is actually overjoyed when he gets back to his machine.

Another, and very striking presentation of an old and highly skilled worker is found in Libedinski's *A Week*.

"Well, anyhow, it's done with now," says the worker Andreyev after recounting the terrible state of oppression in which the workers were kept in the old days. "There is no going back to the past. Sergei Zakharitch [his old employer] is in Japan now, perhaps, or perhaps in America. And in his factory I am all but master."

Andreyev is president of the Factory Committee. In his account of the inefficient working of the factory, we have a clear picture of the difficulties that confronted the proletariat in its efforts to start the wheels of industry going. "The workmen sabotage, rations are poor and given out irregularly, the system of payment is idiotic,

the machines are old and broken." Furthermore, the worker has not yet learned to manage the works, and Andreyev is forced to admit that "there would be no harm in us taking a lesson" from the old owner, who, though he "was hard and cunning and loved his power," loved the factory still better, spent days and nights there, knew every machine in the place, knew how each workman worked, but, "most important of all, had imagination . . . managing, business imagination." Andreyev draws a very vivid sketch of the present bureaucratic director of the works, an engineer and a Communist. "He never comes out of his office, and can't hold his own with the non-party specialists. One to one, I can still argue with him, but at a meeting he's all over me at once. I don't know when you can ask leave to speak and when you can't, and he at once, 'on the motion before the house' and so on, and so on. I feel that he is lying and falsifying, but catch him I can't, and if I do try to speak, I talk as clumsily as if my tongue were tied in a knot."

The outstanding works of fiction dealing with the worker and his problems during the early period of reconstruction are Liashko's *Furnace*, and Gladkov's *Cement*. Even the titles are suggestive of the industrial orientation of the Soviet Union. Yet these novels are not purely industrial; *i.e.*, they do not deal *exclusively* with the task of re-establishing production. Here in addition to the "economic front," we have the "domestic" and "cultural" fronts. The revitalization of industry is intertwined with the problems of the family, with marital and parental relations. In both novels we have civil war heroes who have returned to their respective factories, only to find everything in a state of neglect and dilapidation. Both meet with the stolid disaffection of

the workers, with sabotaging on the part of the non-party specialists, with bureaucracy in the Communist organization. At the end, both succeed in organizing the workers into shape and the factory into working order.

The ambition of the worker has extended, however, beyond the mere restoring of old factories, he is actually making an effort to industrialize the nation, to electrify the remotest villages, to expand ultra-modern means of communication. He is endeavoring further to emancipate the women by instituting widespread communal kitchen service, nurseries for children, equal pay for equal work, etc. The modern proletarian hero is not so much the warrior, the poet or the athlete. He is the industrialist, the scientific manager, the one who is capable of planning and executing vast schemes of production, mechanization, rationalization. The man who can improve the quality of sausage while reducing its price by a few kopecks, like the central figure of Olesha's *Envy*, is a greater hero, is more popularly acclaimed and more widely admired than the composer of a symphony.

BUREAUCRATS AND SPECIALISTS

If the induction of middle class elements into the Communist Party was of common occurrence, the induction of such elements into managing and executive positions in industry and commerce and the army was almost inevitable. The proletariat "had all the resources of power, but it did not know enough." It needed trained men, specialists, experts in various fields—and these could be obtained for the most part from those who had had the advantages of education; *i.e.*, from the upper and middle classes.

In books, the types of the Party bureaucrat and the

non-party "Spets" (specialist) are closely akin to the Nepman. Of these, Soviet literature offers numerous illustrations. Although many of the specialists and bureaucrats are members of the Communist Party, they belong psychologically to the past. For all their Party affiliations, they are to all intents and purposes typical bourgeois—smug, fat, self-satisfied individualists, with not a shred of the early idealism in them. A steady job in some office, remoteness from the masses, relative economic security, domestic comfort, a pretty and socially ambitious wife, children—all this tends to make a man cautious, soft, morally flabby; it dampens his revolutionary ardor, it cools his self-sacrificing zeal. Gradually, often without himself being aware of it, he is sucked into the morass of bourgeois felicity, and then he is lost to Communism and the Revolution. Despite perpetual self-criticism, and severe cleansings of the Communist Party, this fatal ailment has not been effectively checked. Bureaucracy has grown into a bogey which every articulate Russian of all classes finds especial joy in assailing.

Take, for example, Pantelaimon Romanov's story, *Stars*. Here we have the two civil-war heroes, Petia and Vasia, who meet after a few years of separation. During this time the peasant boy, Petia, undeterred by hunger and want, has entered the Moscow University, has dedicated himself to science, and, though still hungry and shabby, is well on the way of becoming a star of the first magnitude. Vasia, however, has followed a different course. He has become the Chairman of the District Executive Committee, has married, made for himself a cozy home, acquired expensive furniture, planted a flower garden around his cottage, grown corpulent—a belly, a double chin and a thick neck—has a servant and a fine carriage at his disposal, a carriage



Reclining Woman (D. Sterenberg)

"fit for the Chairman of the District Soviet." At first he is glad to receive Petia into his home. Petia awakens in him a host of glorious memories of heroism, sacrifice, achievement. But later, when Vasia's wife, on returning from a party, is annoyed to discover her husband's shabby guest, Vasia's enthusiasm subsides, and he becomes painfully conscious of the compromising appearance of his friend. A vague feeling of loyalty to his old comrade makes Vasia ill-at-ease. He even gets into a quarrel with his shrewish wife on account of him. This feeling soon evaporates, when he notices the unpleasant impression Petia's unprepossessing exterior and absent-mindedness make on his convivial visitors. After a few days, the guest is glad to leave, and the host is more than glad to let him go.

In Puchkov's story *Apple*, we see the "Spets," the chief engineer of the mines, dash by in an automobile. This gentleman "was formerly a stock-holder in the mines, now he sits in the office as a 'Spets,' his son by his side also installed as an engineer. . . . They live—they simply bathe in milk. . . ." This treatment of the "Spets" is, of course, quite different from the treatment accorded by Gladkov to his engineer Kleist. But even in Gladkov's *Cement* Kleist is an exception, the rest of the specialists, as we shall soon see, are very much like those depicted by Puchkov.

In the same story of Puchkov's we are also shown a most devastating picture of a Communist bureaucrat—the Secretary of the Local Committee—Comrade Hirshberg. "He was dark, rattling, with a distrustful eye—just as if everyone about him were a swindler. It was clear that he had never held a spade in his hands. He was one of those slick rascals. But when it came to wagging the tongue or pushing the pen he sure was a

cracker-jack." Mitka, the worker who tells this story, is sickened at the sight of the "Spets" and of Hirshberg. At one of the workers' meetings, he expresses his thorough disgust with the way the mines are run. Hirshberg . . . began to yell . . . and spit all over himself . . . and shake his little whiskers . . . a regular pug-dog. He berated Mitka, calling him "hoodlum, shifter, counter-revolutionist"; he declared that the specialists were "indispensable people" and that they must be supported; he finally out-manuevred the hypercritical Mitka. "I had a bitter taste in my mouth," says Mitka. "O you little rat," he thinks, "at the front I hadn't seen you; in the mines I hadn't seen you, and now it is you who play the hero, and the indispensable person is after all you and not I."

A similar group of "Spetses" and bureaucrats is depicted in Feodor Gladkov's *Cement*. This is how the heroic worker Chumalov, whose efforts to restore the cement works are almost frustrated by the sabotaging tactics of specialists and bureaucrats, addresses one of the assistant directors of the cement works, a gentleman with "a silver close-cropped mustache," "gold pince-nez" and "gold-filled teeth":

"Don't talk this rot to me. I know all your intrigues perfectly well. I'm not going to leave it at this for the sake of your beautiful face. . . . You took me for a fool and tried to humbug me. . . . Now I'm going to break your head and your ribs!" And another worker exclaims: "They must be crushed, the bastards! Into the sea with them, the dogs! . . . It's the old gang who dream of the Czar's rule. They are waiting for their old master, the dirty swine! They must all be shot! No good can be expected from them." Nor are Communist bureaucrats spared: "Bureaucracy is ruining us," shouts

an old worker. "Bureaucracy. We've scarcely had time to bury the bodies of our comrades . . . their blood is hardly dry . . . before we're sitting in private rooms and easy chairs with lovely riding breeches like generals. And the formalities—docketing papers—marking rooms 'no admittance' . . . Soon we shall get to 'Your Excellency'! We had comrades. Where are they? I feel that the working class is oppressed and miserable once more . . ." ¹⁶

The spirit of the post-NEP days is described in numerous other works. In Alexandra Kolontai's *Red Love* we see the Communist Vladimir fall into the subtle meshes of comfortable living. His wife, a devoted Communist, is shocked when, upon rejoining him after a separation of a few months, she finds him living in luxury: rugs, curtains, silk quilts, wardrobes, candelabras, paintings, mirrors, a servant. "Didn't I feather a cozy little nest for my little girl?" he exclaims proudly. "Why, do you know what these furnishings would cost nowadays? Billions! Do you really think that my salary as manager would enable me to buy such luxuries? All these things were supplied to me. I was lucky enough to come at the time when it was possible, with the assistance of some friends, to obtain such furnishings from the authorities. Now they've put a stop to all this. No one can have his home furnished like this today. Not unless he pays cash. Besides, I bought several things on my own account during the winter."

Vladimir enumerates everything, happily, contentedly. His wife's eyes grow colder and colder; they glisten with wrath. She suspects him of dishonesty. But he naïvely reassures her that his salary is big enough to cover all

¹⁶ *Cement*, by Feodor Gladkov, International Publishers, New York.

these expenditures. "Your monthly salary?" she shouts in rage. "But how dare you, a Communist, spend it for such trash, for such nonsense? Poverty's increasing! Misery and poverty are round about! And the unemployed—have you forgotten them. Well, Sir Manager, will you be good enough to answer?" Vladimir did not give in; he wanted to bring his wife Vasya to reason, to convince her in an amiable way. . He laughed at her: "You live like a sparrow under the gables, and have no idea what money is worth. Others are earning even more and live quite differently. They make a really elegant appearance."¹⁷

Indeed, some of the Communist officials and Red Directors of Industries portrayed in Soviet literature do "make an elegant appearance." Alexei Ivanovitch, the Red Director in Serge Semenov's novel *Natalia Tarpova* has managed to accumulate an excellent private collection of rare books, beautiful paintings and fine antiques. A prominent Communist in the same novel, after spending a few hours in intimate relations with his Communist sweetheart says to her: "I've been watching you for two weeks. . . . Now, please, listen to me, withdraw from the organization." "From what organization?" she asks in surprise. "From the Party." "But what shall I do then?" Natalia Tarpova asks, feeling the blood rising to her head, refusing to believe her ears. "You'll be my wife, an interesting lady." "What is he talking about?" Tarpova asks herself, still refusing to believe her ears. But her lover continues: "I can't imagine myself living with a woman who is a member of the Party. Judge for yourself: I come home between seven and eight. My wife is away. Nine, ten, eleven—

¹⁷ *Red Love* by Alexandra Kollontay, Seven Arts Publishers, New York.

she isn't home yet. One o'clock—she comes from a meeting. Fagged out. She is in no mood for me. But I've been thirteen years in the Party! I'm entitled to some rest at home. In my home I want warmth, cosiness and a lovely wife to meet me." . . . "What a wretch!" Tarpova thinks to herself.

In Yuri Libidinski's *Commissars* we again see certain important Communist Commissars slip from the straight and narrow path of Communist impeccability. Communist heroes, wearing the order of the Red Flag, men who had endured cold and hunger and faced death without flinching, now fall victims to the poison of bourgeois luxury.

In Alexei Tolstoi's story *Azure Cities* the worker Buzheninov, a dreamer, a poet and a hero of the civil wars, is repelled by the Soviet official Utiovkin, a "scoundrel," "a Lovelace" and "our best foxtrotter." To the romantic Buzheninov, the official Utiovkin, his manner of eating liver, licking cigarettes, and smiling under his big nose, a self-satisfied grin spreading from one corner of his mouth to the other, is symbolical of the unspeakable pettiness, the ocean of pettiness under which the Revolution seems to be drowning.

THE INTELLIGENTSIA SINCE 1921

With the conclusion of the Civil War and the institution of the New Economic Policy a new epoch begins, too, in the life of the intelligentsia, or at least that portion of it which has managed to survive the tribulations of the preceding years. Three processes are clearly discernible: disintegration, adaptation, and assimilation. Keeping aloof, sabotaging, spending one's stored-away belongings has become exceedingly difficult. The hopes

for foreign intervention have been shattered. On the other hand, the period of reconstruction, together with the re-introduction of trade, has offered the lingering sections of the middle class an opportunity to participate in the rehabilitation of the country. Years of famine and the loss of ordinary comforts have taught them a bitter lesson. They have become intensely practical. What interests them now is profits, salaries, fees, over-time pay. Their only criteria of life are animal comforts, a room to live in, a job. In the words of the teacher Ozhegov in N. Ogniev's *Diary of a Communist Undergraduate*: "They have become so callous as to be ready to cut the other man's throat for the sake of money, to raise intrigues against him, to crawl before the powerful on their hands and knees, to grab whatever they can lay their hands on, to do their term in jail so long as they are allowed to start all over again." In brief, these erstwhile intellectuals have abandoned their last claim to spiritual superiority and refinement and have become indistinguishable parts of the new unscrupulous self-seeking bourgeoisie in a strangely hybrid, proletarian-bourgeois, post-NEP society. While the majority—the sensitive, the intransigent, the less adaptable—emigrated or perished, the more elastic elements of the intelligentsia have managed either to adapt themselves to the new conditions of the NEP, or to assimilate themselves so completely with the dominant Communist-proletarian group as to lose their identity.

Once the intelligentsia, as a group, stood for "cultural acceleration." The Revolution has robbed it of this lofty function. Now it is the working class that is building the new order, the new forms of social life. Indeed, there is no intelligentsia left. "It has vanished as completely as the gentry, the aristocracy, and the old

Civil Service," complains the old revolutionary intellectual Ozhegov. "'There are Nepmen now, and specialists, and Soviet employees, and new lawyers, but the old intelligentsia is gone, gone for ever."

It is noteworthy that even in the days of rabid persecution of intellectual heterodoxy, the poet Briusov, though a *bona fide* member of the Communist Party, evinced a similar attitude when he referred sympathetically to the intelligentsia in such lines as

*Pray, pray for the holiday roses,
For the innocent lilies, O pray!
For the grass-hopper's indolent poses,
For the dream that a poet composes,
For the useless, the futile, O pray. . . .*

Also in Fedin's recent novel *Brothers* (1928), we hear the charming old Professor Arseny Arsenievich Bakh, in conversation with a Communist, give utterance to the same sentiments:

"As I crossed the Neva," he confides, "I again began to feel that the man who is so irrevocably passing out of life, that this man is not less worthy of admiration than the new man. We do not know the beauty that you will create. We do not know how you will feel your new beauty. But never again will our feeling be repeated, for never again will the man of our epoch be repeated. Yet we knew how to feel, Rodion, we could create the beautiful and be carried away by it! And it grieves me, Rodion, that the new humanity casts us out of life so ruthlessly. It is sad; for the complete disappearance of our type will be as much of a loss to the future as the complete disappearance of zoological species is to science. We carry within us emotions which you combat not because they are harmful, but because

you are devoid of them, because you refuse to see their significance. . . . Is it possible that the new humanity will forever, forever lose even the faintest idea of our—well, try to understand me, Rodion—here (striking his breast), is there nothing beautiful here? Is it possible that this will escape you forever, and that posterity—No! We have a right to preserve and pass on to you all the mighty stirrings of our souls! . . .

These are poignant words. The old professor is vaguely aware of a new humanity and a new beauty descending upon this earth: action, movement, logic, science, skyscrapers. . . . But what about contemplation, quiescence, introspection—are not these values worthy of preservation? What about the idyllic *Noblemen's Nests* and the lovely *Cherry Orchards*—are they doomed to extinction, oblivion?

The professor is too old and too deeply rooted in the past to be the victim of a psychological dualism. He belongs wholly to the past, he remains a loyal worshipper of the gods of his generation. Infinitely more tragic is the fate of those sincere members of the intelligentsia who were caught in the Revolution at a period in their lives when they were too young to be resigned to extinction and too old to be effectually metamorphosed. "The Revolution has descended upon us when we were of middle-age," says Marietta Shaginian in her essay *The New Life and Art*. "This, of course, was a little too late for us to enlist as *Pioneers* (Communist organization for youngsters below sixteen); on the other hand, it was also a little too early for us to retire to the hearth." Shaped by the past, subtle, decadent, reflective, this "refined intelligentsia" was nevertheless not ready to withdraw from the scene, to give up in the face of the new humanity by saying with the old professor Bakh: "We

do not know the beauty that you will create, we do not know how you will feel your new beauty." On the contrary, they were anxious to know, eager to learn and adapt themselves.

"Let us get near you, closer to you," appeals Shaginian to the new people, "let us touch what grows from your very roots," give us a chance to choose, do not make "beautiful Josephs" of us,— "Joseph might have come to love Potiphar's wife had she not hastened to cut off his volition impulses, had she not taken away from him the freedom of choice."

The author's impassioned plea for a rapprochement, her entreaty, "Let us touch what grows from your very roots" is typical of many intellectuals. They yearn for support from the new economic relations, crave to be absorbed in the new humanity, to lose their sterility by contact with the mainsprings of contemporary life. Most of them fail. The onus of the past is too heavy. We have seen it among those intellectuals who had been fighting in the Red Army; even on the battlefield their refinement and sensitiveness provoked suspicion and caustic comment, which in turn tended to alienate them from the class toward which they yearned. Peace and New Economic Policy have not remedied the situation. "By the inevitable course of events, these people are placed in the Hamlet dilemma; there they are crucified on the crossroads, while life goes rushing past them. . . . What can the crucified do? . . . We intellectuals who have followed the Revolution are all going to be crucified in the end—crucified not by the Central Government, but by the people themselves! . . . These shipwrecked intellectuals are bound to put the question to themselves: To be or not to be? To live or not to live? . . . Yes, you can live, when those around you love and

trust you, and listen to your words and watch your actions, which to them are the result of an honest attitude to life and a desire to progress. But when there is no faith, no love, no trust—you inevitably ask the question: To be or not to be? and say, No. . . . We are in a prison cell, without air. . . . What are we? An amputated limb, a useless fragment, a piece of emptiness, internal emigrés.”¹⁸

No wonder the young intellectual poet Shakhov mentioned in the Diary commits suicide: he is a square peg, he does not fit into the new scheme. In his letter to his Communist friend he enviously remarks: “You are a thing without edges; you are a round and oily ball, and will pass, like a croquet-ball, through all the gates. . . . I am a triangle. One angle rests on the past, another on the present, and the third in the future. I can’t get rid of the past (I’m a Prince); I can’t be part of the present (I’m a blue-blooded degenerate); and the future is nonsensical (it’s the logical conclusion of my philosophic thought).”

Small wonder, too, that Ostankin in Pantelaimon Romanov’s *Right to Life* also commits suicide. Poor Ostankin, the journalist, was so anxious, he tried so hard “to grasp what they (the New Humanity, the Communists) needed, that he completely lost what he himself needed, and then began to write stuff that no one needed.”

Thus has history broken the old intelligentsia into a thousand fragments. The unadaptable pass out of life, through natural death or self-annihilation; among those who are still alive there are only a few who have heroically retained their essence in a world overwhelmingly

¹⁸ *The Diary of a Communist Undergraduate.*

new. Others, relatively few, after a period of hysterical tossing about, have at last found themselves, not perfectly, of course, in the new life. They seem to have finally touched the "very roots." They are with the proletariat, they follow its road "without sneers and without ulterior motives, without peacock feathers—they give the Revolution whole-heartedly their only capital—their brains." These are mostly humble people—teachers, doctors, technicians, survey inspectors, agricultural instructors, and a few others. In the minority we find professors, writers, scientists, painters, actors, etc.

These intellectuals have lost their bitterness. They bow before the inevitable, and find consolation in that they have caught a glimpse at the new man, the new life, the new beauty. "I do not feel my age nor the coming end, Sergey," says the famous old revolutionary intellectual Irkutov, in Lidin's story *Youth*, to his old friend professor Yartsev. "That is only a detail. The most important thing is that you and I have not lived our lives in vain. That is what I want to say. You in science, I in Revolution. Behind you a generation of students, your pupils. Behind me hundreds of thousands, hundreds of thousands of builders awakened by the Revolution." There is a note of confidence and cheer in Professor Yartsev's words addressed to the handsome young Soviet aviator: "It is for you young people to take our places." And the old teacher Ozhegov, addressing his Communist student, says: "You know to what a pass I had come. I was in a blind alley, without any escape. . . . You and your friend have helped me to *find myself* in a world in which I had got lost. . . ." He, too, apparently has touched the New Humanity at the "very roots," and his last words are:

"Strange, isn't it? On the whole, I'm happy. . . ." Similarly, the famous singer, in Romanov's inspiring story *Beacon Lights*, loses his contempt for the new barbarians when he finally comes to realize, by coming into intimate contact with a fine group of new village teachers, that the younger generation is the torch-bearer of a new life and a new beauty. The torch shines, and lures, and calls. . . . Alone in a snowy desert, the cheered traveller whispers: "Always toward light, and everywhere toward light, and to the very last toward light. . . ."

But the most beautiful passage in current literature dealing with this rapprochement between the intellectual who has "touched" the New Man at the "very roots" and the worker is to be found in Gladkov's novel *Cement*, when the once bitter counter-revolutionary engineer Kleist and the Communist worker Gleb Chumalov come to value each other as fine men and as useful members of society.

One day, while inspecting the repairs going on in the various dust-covered buildings, amidst the tramlings and shouts of the workmen, Gleb encountered Engineer Kleist. The extraordinarily fixed look in the technologist's eyes had already more than once surprised Gleb. They burned with emotion and anxious questioning. Kleist took him gently by the arm and they walked out on to the viaduct. Shoulder to shoulder they walked on to the terrace of the tower where they had met each other on the memorable evening. On their right, down below, the Diesels were murmuring and the dynamos hidden in their depths sang softly. On the roofs of the buildings were crawling the figures of the workmen, small as dolls. Sheet-iron rang out reverberantly; hammers beat like musketry and drums. The windows of the buildings were no longer black and gaping, but were flashing and colored—reflecting the blue sky and fiery sun.

Gleb patted Kleist on the shoulder and laughed.

"Well, Comrade Technologist! Everything's coming all right. When a fool says, 'I have strength,' he is already no longer a fool, but only partly one. Then, if he goes right on, without hesitating, he's an intelligent fool! We Communists dream like fools; but not so badly after all, Comrade Technologist. On the anniversary of the Revolution, we shall start this huge thing shaking with fire and smoke."

Engineer Kleist smiled strainedly; he preserved his usual air of dignity and importance. Suddenly he pressed Gleb's hand.

"Chumalov, I beg you to forget the great crime I committed towards you and the other workmen. The remembrance that I once gave up people to death and to torture gives me no rest."

And Kleist looked into Gleb's face with fear and hope; he could not repress the trembling of his hands, nor could he hold his head straight and still.

Gleb looked him full in the face, his eyes flashing, with sharp points. His face suddenly became motionless, obstinate and terrible, like the face of a corpse. But this was for a second only and then his teeth showed in a smile.

"Comrade Technologist, that was long ago—it's past. In those days we were at each other's throats. But just remember this: if you had not saved my wife at that time not even her bones would be left now. Now you are one of our best workers—a fine intelligence and hands of gold. Without you we couldn't have got anything done. Just see what a wonderful job we have done under your guidance."

"My dear Chumalov, I intend to devote all my knowledge and experience—all my life—to our country. I have no other life except that life with all of you; and I have no other task except our struggle to build up a new culture."

And for the first time Gleb saw Kleist's eyes fill with tears, through which hitherto unseen depths became visible. And those things that were within his eyes were greater than his eyes, greater than himself.

Gleb pressed his hand and laughed.

"Well then, Herman Hermanovich, let's be friends!"

"Right, Chumalov, we shall be friends."

And the Engineer walked away with steady step, leaning on his stick.

THE PEASANT SINCE 1921

One of the striking features of the pre-NEP phase of the Revolution in the villages is the fact that the Communist neophytes who during the early years of the Revolution propagated urban ideals among the peasants either died or frequently went to the city: Sofron and Virinea are killed, Andron is mortally wounded and Maryra withdraws from the village with the Red Army. This holds good of most of the early stories. Tatiana, in Shishkov's *Cranes*, driven to despair by the village darkness, goes to "seek her future" in the city. Andrey, in Romanov's *Black Fritters*, leaves his wife and children in the country, makes his way to the city, there to become an important man in a big factory. Antip, in Seifullina's *the Old Woman*, abandons the home of his parents, and migrates to the city. Tania, in Malashkin's *Moon From the Right Side*, deserts the village in order to expose herself to city influences. Many more stories might be mentioned with this as a central theme. Those of the peasants who had been infected with the city virus, were either killed off by the village or spewed out by it as a pernicious and unassimilable toxin.

We have thus seen, from the very beginning, two mighty, elemental forces, two cultures ranged against each other, both implacable, unyielding—city versus village, town versus country. The introduction of the New Economic Policy has made this conflict even more palpable. The village, though shaken to its foundations, is still the old village—priests, witch-doctors, kulaks; poverty,

primitive agriculture, ignorance. Communist dreams of electrification, mechanization, collectivization are still, for the most part, but nebulous wishes. There are still countless peasants who view the Communist scheme of mechanized agriculture with abhorrence. This mood is so persistent that it still finds vigorous expression in the works of some of the most gifted peasant writers, particularly in the poetry of Kliuev and Klychkov. Though Kliuev and Klychkov have been writing revolutionary verse, their conception of the revolution is a purely peasant, nationalist, religious conception; their imagined paradise, a purely rural, Russian, Christian paradise. According to them, the truly liberating forces are not technology, not the city, not the proletariat, but Christian humility, the patriarchal family, the old peasant. The tractor may bring more bread, but it will remove all beauty and "cosiness" from the countryside, it will drive the tender birch tree into the lake, and will send down such anguish upon the village that the strongest liquor will not dispel it. They point to the pathetic death of the gifted peasant poet Yessenin as incontrovertible proof of the devitalizing, degenerating influence of the city, and of the utter irreconcilability of the two inimical forces. Yessenin's songs and Yessenin's loves, Yessenin's life and Yessenin's death are, they claim, one stirring, piercing, shattering cry of a soul in agony—a wild peasant boy lost in a maze of machines, automobiles, aeroplanes, bohémias, radios, jazz. Yessenin married to Isidora Duncan, Yessenin on Forty-second Street and Broadway, Yessenin in spats and a silk hat—what a grim jest! Indeed, not only Kliuev and Klychkov, but Yessenin himself was quite conscious of the incongruity. He complains:

*The crazy street
Is toppling, howling, tossing,
Till sunrise the thunder of the squares
Hovers over the city.
Like an obsolete letter
Lost in a dilapidated primer,
I too, lost, wander about
In the medley of shop-windows and people.
I am hemmed in by railings,
Yet leaving the body behind, my soul
Would fain run to that wooded land,
Unforgettably fixed in my memory.
In this stone abyss
My little complaints are unheard;
These stone buildings
Need not my quiet sorrow.
It were good to sit until dark
At a little table, in a saloon,
Under the wine-laden shelves
And, smothered by the smoke,
Alone, recollect my native place,
Where the little pine trees are so curly
Where such a good moon
Sails forth in the night.*

The Muscovites have become so proud of the "tempo" of their new life. What do you think of our tempo, isn't it dizzying? Dizzying indeed! To some, intolerably dizzying, particularly to those who have, like the peasant boy Yessenin, been brought up in the oriental calm of a Russian village. Trains rumble, cars hoot, airplanes buzz, the smoke of the factories hides the sun, portfolios, caps, hats, bobbed hair, dinner pails, dash about, and push, jostle, and are in a hurry; the Comsomsols parade roaring the Internationale—and the peasant boy stands in the midst of all this, lost, envious. How he

would love to "roll up his pants and run after the Comsomol," but he can't, he has not the strength, he is not attuned to the perplexing, excruciating rhythms of modernity. Unable to become absorbed in a city, he begins to dream of a blessed Nirvana. He wants to be "quiet and austere," he is filled with the "stillness of the stars," he dreams of "being lost in Russia's endless green," and "loving everything, wishing for nothing." Always in search of an escape, he feels "like an alien in his own land," and at times even his beloved fields are only "temporary abodes" of his spirit. In one of his poems, Yessenin describes a race between a young steed and a new locomotive. The locomotive wins, the horse dies of exhaustion. Thus, too, the young, wild, spirited steed—Yessenin found that he was incapable of adapting himself to an era of inanimate locomotives and proudly dashed himself to death. The city tempo was too much for this son of the quiet plains and placid waters of "Mother Russia"; he succumbed, smitten by a host of inner and outer contradictions.

The end of Yessenin, some writers have suggested, is symbolical of what happens when the village encounters the city. But, at most this is only partly true, for if in Yessenin's case the spiritual conflict engendered by the impact of two opposing civilizations, of two antipodal forms of life, was finally resolved in suicide, we have another peasant poet, Doronin, where a similar conflict has resulted in a healthy, harmonious synthesis. In Doronin's poetry the whisper of the forest and the song of the lark blend beautifully with the whistle of the factory and the purr of the motor. Unlike Yessenin, he does not weep over the mouldering remnants of somnolent, patriarchal, rustic Russia. Unlike Kliuev and Klychkov, he does not fear that the tractor will re-

move all beauty and cosiness from the country landscape. On the contrary, the grass will not be less velvety, the birch tree less supple, the fruit less luscious, and the birds less joyous when the tiller of the soil will have more time to enjoy them, or when "crystal edifices and crystal factories will glisten in a sea of light and verdure." Instead of bemoaning the past, this peasant previsions the final synthesis of rural and urban culture. The Revolution is destined to remove differences, to fill the gaping gulf between town and country, to draw the village into modern, progressive, technical reconstruction of the whole of Russia.

THE NEW KULAK

Whether or not the village will ultimately be communized and industrialized in accordance with Doronin's poetic prophecies or the orthodox Communist plan, one thing is certain—the old village is passing. Slowly, steadily, ruthlessly, the town is encroaching upon the country. Whatever the Government's momentary policy, its ultimate objective is clear: urbanization, industrialization, socialization. Its weapons are subtle and effective: tractors, electricity, radio, the printed word, logic. Every year numerous peasant youths are drafted into the Red Army, which is little less than a popular university. Year after year more and more city-trained, communistically-indoctrinated peasants get into strategic positions in the villages, into the Soviets, the schools, the various local offices.

Stolid, cumbersome, the village sullenly rebuffs the onslaught. It fights, but it yields—point by point, doggedly holding on to the ancient and the familiar, snapping back, striking out chaotically, it none the less yields.

That the *muzhik* will keep on yielding indefinitely and in all directions is extremely doubtful. In certain important respects, however, great forward strides have been made. Ten years of concerted educational effort have begun to bear fruit. Books, libraries, newspapers and movies are certainly making their way into the village. There is a keener appreciation of modern implements, of modern methods, and of modern conveniences than there had ever been before. It seems, however, that even education is intensifying the class struggle. Peasant education is, in fact, turning out to be a two-edged sword. As the peasant, especially the wealthier one, becomes more enlightened, he tends to become more class conscious and refractory. Realizing his importance in the structure of the State, he is prone to balk at playing the second fiddle to the relative handful of city workers. He demands more and more vociferously and persistently adequate returns for his products. In literature, the kulak is invariably depicted as versatile, plastic, adaptable, hypocritical, daring, resolute. Though he exploits the peasants, his influence tends to raise their cultural and economic life. He makes things hum: he enlivens industry; he initiates all kinds of socially useful schemes—irrigation, reclamation, scientific fertilization. Svaaker, the excellently drawn kulak in Fedin's famous *Transvaal*, dreams of electrifying the whole district. "Nadin . . . Nadin . . ." he says to his wife, "What do you think, will I be able to introduce electricity into the entire district? Eh?" And his wife answers: "It seems to me, Svaaker, you can accomplish anything you set your heart on." And another modern kulak in Shiskov's *Wonder of Wonders*, though he pokes fun at the Communists, very gently and cir-

cumspectly of course, exults over the technical and cultural progress of the village. He is even ready to forgive Bolshevik godlessness and to do reverence to the memory of Lenin, in recognition of the Government's successful electrification of the district. Similarly aggressive, unscrupulous, but capable and "energetically functioning" kulaks are encountered in Korbov's *Katia the Long* and *Rooster's Word*; in Tveriak's *Na Otshibe*, in Karpov's *Fifth Love*, and in other recent works of fiction dealing with the peasant.

An economically progressive element, the kulak, as we have already pointed out, meets with social obloquy and legal persecution. The trouble is, he is too clever and enterprising. By skillful maneuvering, by bribery, and flattery, and unconscionable machination, he worms himself into the village Soviet, and coöperative, and other organizations; he manipulates votes so that he often manages, for a time at least, to emerge winner. Wealthy, rapacious, determined, this new village bourgeois, because of his very progressiveness and adaptability, looms up in Soviet literature as a serious danger to the whole elaborate scheme of village socialization. Naturally, he does not remain unmolested. Solidly ranged against him are the new village Communists, the new village youth, the new village teachers. In literature, at any rate, the kulak is almost always frustrated at the end. The coöperative, the village Commune, the Soviet are finally purged of his presence. Social virtue generally triumphs. Although such triumphs in fiction may be more in the nature of wish fulfilment than that of objective depiction, they do nevertheless have some factual basis: a ruined and embittered kulak is not at all an unusual sight in a Russian village nowadays.

VILLAGE FERMENTS

The real exponents of the *social* aspect of economic progress are the young village Communists, the new youth that came to replace the ignorant, undisciplined, and basically anarchistic Sofrons and Androns. How affectionately the Soviet writers describe these young people; how caressingly they halt on any episode revealing this cheering phase of country life; how lyrical they grow when they tell of a Comsomol meeting in the village, of a youthfully heated discussion of the "latest" books on agricultural methods, or tractors, or communal organization; with what pride they dwell on the new forms of labor and love among the young ones!

In Pavel Nizovoi's story *Mitiakino*, the peasant is happy over his scientific gardening ("according to a book"): the rows of vegetables are as straight as rails, the trunks of the apple trees are covered with white-wash, the cherry trees are supported by props, etc. . . . Ivan, the hero of the story, is active in the party, works hard on the field, educates his sisters, develops a plan for draining the noxious Mitiakino swamps. "We must get out of these swamps," declares Ivan allegorically; "I have seen all kinds of people, and lived all kinds of lives; I have seen and heard a great deal of good and evil—and I've come to one conclusion: the muzhik's life must be changed from top to bottom." In Seifullina's story *Humus*, Sofron's young son, after escaping the Whites, ran to the city. His words are the last words in the story: "The village must be changed!" That was in 1919. The realization that the village must be changed has by this time become a truism in Russia. Even the Mitiakino priest, egged on by Ivan, exclaims: "It's disgusting, nasty—I must make an end of it. I'll throw

up everything and go away. I'll take a job in the co-operative."

In Russian fiction the most important single factor in the changing village life is almost invariably the ex-Red-Army-man. He fights on both the economic and political fronts. His main function, though, is that of a cultural ferment.

"The devils!" grumbles the returned Red soldier Pavel Mokhov in Shishkov's uproarious story *A Theatrical Performance in the Village of Ogryzovo*,¹⁹ "if one takes a bird's-eye view of them, they haven't even been touched by the Revolution. It's a disgrace." And without further ado he proceeds to organize a theatrical circle. In a most farcical manner, the author describes the commotion caused in the village by the whole business of writing the play, distributing the parts, and producing the spectacle. Yet, to one acquainted with the old village, the story comes as a most welcome revelation. The mere fact that the village even thinks of the theatre, or of the movies, or of the school (there are numerous Soviet stories to illustrate this aroused interest), or that such signs as "Please do not spit on the floor," "Please do not permit any private conversations during the performance," "Please do not swear during the intermissions," decorate the walls, is touching testimony of the tremendous cultural upheaval in rural Russia.

The most realistic and convincing picture of this upheaval is given in Karpov's novel *Fifth Love*. Here the plot revolves around the Communist Sergey, who has just returned from the Army where he rose to the rank of a Red Commander. Unlike the accepted stencil of the Communist hero in Soviet literature, unlike the in-

¹⁹ *Flying Osip*, International Publishers.

evitably honest, noble, courageous, wise Red Army man who stirs the village out of its inertia, Sergey is human, all too human. His faults, from the Communist point of view, are many and serious. First, he is not a scion of a genuinely "poor" peasant family; second, he is the godson of a peasant who has become a prosperous village kulak; third, he has been too long away from the village, and his perception of the intricacies of village life has been dulled; fourth, he cannot resist the lure of an occasional drink and cannot keep out of the deviltry of reckless and irresponsible love-making. As a result, and despite his cleverness, eloquence, comparative culture, loyal adherence to Party principles, glowing faith in the triumph of the Revolution, Sergey bungles his affairs, gets into all sorts of tight corners, is involved in a drunken brawl which culminates in the murder of the village correspondent, is arrested, tried, and convicted, only to be exonerated in the end, when it is discovered that the real murderer of the peasant correspondent is the village kulak.

The speech delivered by counsel for the defense presents such an excellent analysis of sundry aspects of Soviet life that a few excerpts from it may not inappropriately be used in this sketch. "Citizens!" says the advocate, "on the bench of the accused you see before you not an ordinary citizen, but a Party member, and an active Party member at that—the energetic Soviet worker, Sergey Medvediev. That is why this case must be studied with particular care. . . . The trouble with the analysis of the case as presented to you by the prosecution is that it is not a dialectic analysis of social phenomena. The prosecution approached facts as if they were purely static, without examining them in motion, in the process of unfoldment; it also ignored the

milieu in which those facts had taken place—that is why the light it has thrown on the case is one-sided and utterly false. Indeed, the prosecution has not taken into account the social complex in which the accused had found themselves, nor their development as community workers, nor the entire web of forces found in real life. . . .”

Throughout the speech the defense stresses the point that the accused was a thoroughly principled Party-member and a well-disciplined Red-Army man. Counsel refers to the high praise bestowed upon Sergey by the office of the collective of which the accused was a member, and under whose auspices he had taken study courses while in the service in the Red Army; he points out the extreme difficulty of carrying on social work in the village, and Sergey's relative success in organizing a coöperative store, in building a school, in drawing the village teacher into collective work, in organizing the Comsomol and the theatrical club, etc. Discussing the conditions under which Party work is being carried on in the village, counsel directs the jury's attention to the subtle distinction between a Communist-peasant and a Communist-worker, and the manner in which the former may imperceptibly slip into the attitude of a kulak.

In answer to the prosecution's charge that the Communist nucleus was not functioning well under Sergey's leadership, and that Sergey failed to stop his father from making home brew, the defense calls attention to certain extenuating circumstances:

“. . . More or less anarchistic elements are still to be found in the village Communist nuclei; this has not yet been done away with, nor can it be done away with all at once. It is unreasonable to expect Sergey to re-

educate the village in a half a year. Nor was it possible for him to re-educate his father. One has to be utterly ignorant of the village to blame him for it. In this matter Sergey is certainly not at fault! . . . To graft a new life onto the old village is a stiff job. Here they still prefer 'the good old ways.' Why, even in the cities the new ideas have not yet emerged fully victorious. Then what do you expect of the village? Here, in accordance with the old custom, the fellows still break each other's ribs on account of the girls. Home brew renders these fights even more brutal. . . . And home brew and drunkenness are also the evil fruits of a social heritage. The question of drink cannot be judged from the point of view of a preconceived morality. . . ."

The most interesting part of the defense is the discussion of the patriarchal peasant family and its retrogressive rôle in Soviet life. This is brought out in connection with the attack on Sergey's character made by the prosecution. The prosecutor intimates that while Sergey was in close relations with one girl, the teacher, he was making love to another, and was thus abusing for immoral purposes the prestige lent to him by his official position. The reply of the defense is, mildly speaking, startling:

"In the Prosecutor's speech I have been particularly struck by one remark which seems to be a direct outgrowth of a conservative conception of the family: it is the assertion that Sergey Medvediev, in cohabiting with one, or two, or three women, has been disrupting the family, and consequently society. He makes wives be unfaithful to their husbands. . . . For my part, citizens, you may live with ten women. Once you have children, however, you must support them! Our code of laws has a special provision dealing with this subject. All we demand of you is that you pay alimony. Medvediev

has been abusing his social position, it is claimed. . . . Have you heard any woman complain about this? There have been no complaints. This question, therefore, should not have been brought up at all. He disrupts the family and society, you say? . . . Just what does he disrupt in society? Exactly nothing, citizens. Perhaps such stories do undermine traditional conservatism, the family; but that the undermining of the family is harmful is a debatable question!

"And permit me to say this: one of the obstacles in our building a collectivist economy is the peasant family! The peasant family is a production cell, thoroughly individualistic, founded on private property, it tends to be self-sufficient; in the family, the father is the head, the owner, and the rest—sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, the wife—are farm hands, subordinates; he has them in his grasp, and that makes the family property more solid. But the sons, as soon as they get children, tend to break away, to separate; and when they separate, they, like their fathers, become heads of families, proprietors. It is not an easy task to stride athwart these families in our advance toward collectivism. Take, for instance Medvediev's family. The old man is dissatisfied with Sergey: the latter does not believe in God, he does not marry a peasant housewife, he spends a great deal of time in communal affairs—this causes discord in the family. Medvediev junior disrupts the family. Had he worked exclusively in the interests of his family property, had he kept away from social work, had he married a good housewife, had he believed in God, the foundations of the family would have remained intact, and from the old Medvediev's family there would have branched off other strong, self-sufficient peasant families. You see, then, that it is the Party members and the Comsomols who constitute the disintegrating elements in the family. It means, then, that the present form of family does not fit into the new life; and that means that new forms, of which the village has not yet the least idea, must begin to crystallize. The most powerful blow at the old family has been our new conception of marriage, the removal of religious sanctity and mystery from marriage.

The new conditions are bound gradually to destroy the old family; collective village economy will smash the old family into bits! From the above we conclude that Medvediev has not been guilty of abusing his social position!"

The implications in this speech are important and far-reaching. Of course, not even in Russia do all, or even most people, subscribe to such extreme views. The speech is merely a projection into the future. Yet it does to a certain extent indicate a tendency that is quite tangible. We are on the threshold of something vast, and new, and incomprehensible. It may take years, decades, perhaps centuries for the seeds that have been cast into the village soil by the present Revolution to germinate, and grow, and bring fruit. But as one looks into the future, one cannot but see that far on the very edge of the horizon, encircled by the nimbus of the rising sun,

*A new sower
Roams the fields;
New seeds
He casts into the furrows. . . .*

THE CULTURAL FRONT

As a reaction to the tenacity of the old culture, the workers began to feel a mighty urge toward the building of a new, a "proletarian" culture. At the outset this urge expressed itself in most grotesque forms; first the externals were affected. White collars, soft hands, genteel manners, good clothes, suave talk became signs of bourgeois leanings, badges of dishonor, treason. Grimy hands, a cap, a leather jacket, heavy boots, gruff talk were indications of good proletarian form. As always in the past, now, too, the ruling class—in this

case the working class—was giving the tone, was the arbiter of fashion. Naturally, the consequences were not infrequently comical.

One of the best burlesques of this tendency is given in Mikhail Zoshchenko's little story *Gold Teeth*,²⁰ where we are told of the discomfiture of the Comsomol Grishka Stepanchikov, caused by three new gold teeth. Grishka's troubles started when he had three teeth knocked out of his mouth. "And he a young fellow too! . . . It isn't interesting for him, you understand, to pass his time without his three teeth. . . . He can't whistle. It's hard to eat. And there is nothing to hold a cigarette with. And then there's a hiss when he speaks! And tea runs out of his mouth." Finally Grishka saved some money and went to the dentist. The dentist, unaware of the peculiar prejudices of a Comsomol circle, put three glittering gold teeth in Grishka's mouth. This created a stir in the circle and involved Grishka in serious unpleasantness. "There was a lot of talk about the event. Where, his comrades would say, did he get those NEP ways? Why such a bourgeois strain? Can't an ordinary Comsomol eat with a hole in his mouth?" And they decided "on principle" to declare the possession of gold teeth subversive of Communism and its ideas, and to force Grishka to contribute his teeth to the fund of the unemployed.

This trend, in its most extreme form, was also manifested in the arts. The proletariat, insisted the extremists, is a class that demands a revolutionary break with the past; it cannot and will not restore esthetic forms that had served as organizational tools of historically outlived social systems. It must produce, immediately,

²⁰ *Azure Cities*, International Publishers.

directly, without delay, new forms as well as new content. Any spiritual intercourse with the past is dangerous and harmful. The workers must destroy the old and begin to build their own culture, develop their own arts, nurture their own artists.

All this put together brought about a rapid decline in the general tone of life, and a disregard for social amenities. Of course, proletarian snobbishness was not the only, nor even the main, cause. Indeed, revolution, famine, and civil war are not exactly the best schools for nurturing the gentler qualities. Furthermore, grotesque ramifications are inevitable in a period of transition and groping. This does not affect the Communist's faith in the ultimate emergence of a new culture. The old order, he maintains, had its own ethic and esthetic worked out by centuries of experience. The new order, however, has not yet arrived; it is still in the process of being born; it is still being forged in the smithy of the Revolution. Even the relatively less complex social-economic structure has not yet been completely overhauled; even here we meet with numerous excrescences, hideous reminders of a not distant past. As to a new psychology and a new morality—these, too, are being fashioned in the smithy of the Revolution. The old mores and taboos and traditions are being undermined, but very little has as yet been put in their place. There is experimentation, searching, abortive solutions of difficulties. Only the finest, the strongest, the most stable are able to preserve their visions undimmed and to keep forging ahead to a better life and a more humane morality. The weak, the neurotic, the volatile, those without sufficient intellectual ballast, lose their heads, and are tossed and hurled and wrecked in the treacherous vortex of the old and the new. Hence pessimism, despair,

suicide among some of the young people; hence hooliganism and bohemianism among others.

We have seen it in the case of the young student-poet Shakhov in *The Diary of a Communist Undergraduate*, but he was a member of the nobility, a "triangular" creature who found his escape in suicide. We have seen it also in the young journalist Ostankin, but he was a member of the decadent intelligentsia. We have later seen it in Yessenin, but Yessenin was a peasant lost in an urban milieu. Strangely enough, however, this mood of despair is found not only among the young ex-noblemen, intellectuals, and uprooted peasants; it is also found, and rather frequently, among the young Communists, young proletarian writers, young students. And in their case, too, it seems, disillusionment and despair are the result of maladjustment.

In Alexei Tolstoi's story *Azure Cities*, for instance, we saw the young and sensitive civil war hero, Buzheninov, the Communist architect and poet, have his glowing visions of beautiful cities and a great and noble race of men smashed against the grey background, the stolidity, the pettiness of a Russian Main street. He became insane; he committed murder and arson, because he could not adapt himself to the prose of remolding life slowly, by "labor and sweat," by books, and the theatre, and the clubhouse, and the tractor, and electricity. He became obsessed with the idea that ". . . an explosion is necessary,—all destroying. . . . A fiery broom to sweep all the dirt away. . . ." And the lovely Communist girl Polia in Gladkov's *Cement* was so distraught over the "bacchanalia of rich shop windows and drunken cafés," over the "blackguards and vampires getting fat by robbery," that she cried out hysterically, "I can't endure it. . . . I can neither un-

derstand nor justify. . . . I can't recognize this. . . . I cannot live with it! . . .” Similarly, in *The Diary of a Communist Undergraduate* we see the demoralization of a young student, a civil war hero. When brought up before a meeting of students on charges of unethical behaviour, he offers the following as part of his defense: “In the civil war all the blood and dirt turned into poetry . . . then our brains were on fire. . . . And when we, with our flaming heads, and hands still hot with the fire of machine-guns, returned to the deserted and broken, tumbled-down towns and factories, in order to build up a new world, there is little wonder that some of us lost courage and our heads cooled. We were back in a dull, prosaic world, comrades. And, after breathing the air of the Steppes and the smell of gunpowder, many of us could not take in at once that the prosaic life also had a poetry of its own. As for me, I haven't been able to take it in yet.”

On September 20, 1924, the Soviet press reported the suicide of Kolia Kuznetsov, a lovable and talented proletarian lyricist, who had tragically ended his life at the very beginning of his creative career. Discussing his death, the Soviet critic G. Lelevich said: “Kuznetsov's death was an occurrence of grave social import. It disclosed a serious ailment prevalent among a certain section of our literary youth.” By “certain section” Lelevich no doubt makes reference to the proletarian poets, particularly those belonging to the Smithy group, who, at the introduction of the NEP, were overwhelmed by a feeling of dismay over what they thought was the “capitulation” of the proletariat before the advancing battalions of the “resuscitated” bourgeoisie. In the pessimistic poems of Mikhail Golodni, A. Dorogoichenko, M. Svetlov—all members of the Comsomol—we have further and more

recent proof of the real danger and social import of the "serious ailment" prevalent among a certain section of Russia's literary youth.

The following by Golodni illustrates this:

*But we, so marvelously gay,
So care-free and so arrogant,
Strut forth our feathers to display,
Mere peacocks, dull and ignorant.*

*Through ages—our inheritance,
Before one truth, we bend our knee;
For other truths, intolerance
And hateful, low contumely.*

*We have been seized by reckless joy.
Alas, our laughter is inane!
We only know with words to toy,
Cold words that chill and numb the brain.*

*Love once of freedom sweetly sang.
Embittered now, she's left our plain.
While we with no regretful pang
Behold coarse, brutish license reign.*

*We cannot think. We shout. We pound.
Shall we, then, ever plumb or gauge,
Despite its drum-beats all around,
The frozen stillness of our age?*

Another symptom of this "serious ailment" are the distressing signs of hooliganism noticeable among the young. This tendency has of late been exposed with remarkable candor in the Soviet press. "With us it is always so," complains L. Sosnovski, a leading Soviet writer, in a vigorous sally against hooliganism; "an

evil must first manifest itself on a wholesale scale, before we begin to pay attention to it, before we begin to tackle it in real earnest. Then begins a mighty campaign; then there is thunder and lightning. With hooliganism it is exactly the same way. Now there is at last talk of severest punishment for the most outrageous acts of hooliganism." In his article, Sosnovski enumerates some harrowing details of hooligan activity: ten fellows raping a young girl in Kharkov; thirty young workers raping a worker-student in Leningrad; a crowd of ruffians attacking a Comsomol demonstration in Novorossysk; a group of boys and girls, all members of the Comsomol, plotting and executing the rape of a young comrade—the girls cooperating in this affair by getting their friend drunk and holding her while the crime was being perpetrated. "This outrage," says Sosnovski, "has been carried out in the spirit of deviltry, hilarity, lots-of-fun. Evidently, in their conduct these young people saw nothing that contradicted the spirit of the Revolution, the proletarian ethic, the proletarian conception of woman and her rights." In these crimes Sosnovski sees malignant vestiges of serfdom, of woman's enslavement, of an obsolete conception of woman not as a personality but a morsel primarily designed by nature for the delectation of man. He rails at the distorted heroics, the cheap Don Juanism bequeathed to the youth by their degenerate fathers. What is particularly deplorable, maintains the alarmed Sosnovski, is that hooligans like Yessenin have managed to gain a poetic halo and numerous emulators. To place a drunkard and bully like Yessenin on a pedestal, to extol and emulate him is worse than folly. He must be discrowned; his vicious influence and the conditions that make such influence potent rooted out of life. In short, according to Sos-

novski, there must be a cultural revolution in Soviet Russia.

In this connection, Walter Duranty's correspondence from Moscow, published in the *New York Times* (June 23, 1929) is very illuminating: "The Kremlin's 'leftward' policy and its insistence upon the class war was illustrated by a number of items in today's press. Not only the facts but the manner of their treatment by the Soviet reporter is significant. Thus in the Leningrad Comsomol . . . a boy named Danilov, feeling tired of life, asked his friend Smirnov to shoot him. Smirnov refused, whereupon a Comsomol girl, Alexandra Kovalenik, with a laugh at Smirnov's cowardice, took the revolver and shot Danilov, who died in a hospital a few days later. A Leningrad court sentenced Alexandra to three years' imprisonment and the report states: Alexandra's diary showed she lost touch with Comsomol work and succumbed to petit bourgeois influence and literature. Danilov was also a victim of Yesseninism. He gave up his Comsomol friends to seek foxtrotting and drunkenness."

The foxtrotting and drunkenness mentioned in the foregoing report are also reflected in literature. We see it in Zizi and the other "foxtrot girls" in the *Diary of a Communist Undergraduate*. We find it in Lev Gumilevski's *Dog Lane*, in Malashkin's *Moon From the Right Side* and in countless other stories, novels, and plays. Of all these, the *Moon From the Right Side* is the most renowned. Its publication created a furore—debates, discussions, and heated arguments all over Russia, in the press, on the platforms, at Comsomol and university meetings. While some critics denounced the novel as an unfair and myopic attack on the Russian youth, as vile slander, pornography, and counter-revolution, others

saw in it an excellent, objectively presented exposé of the uglier trends among the young people. The vehemence of the reaction was such as to raise this artistically indifferent novel to the heights of an important social document.

The central character in the novel is a young girl belonging to one of the Comsomol circles in Moscow. The girl Tania is of peasant origin. At the beginning of the story, we see how, carried away by the Revolution, Tania breaks with her family and with the austere village tradition, and makes her way to the city. In the city she becomes so "revolutionary," so free, so morally emancipated, that within a few years she manages to have intimate relations with "twenty-two different men." Moreover, in the atmosphere of the city, Tania develops "culture." She always reads the decadent, pre-revolutionary poets, uses cosmetics and narcotics, drinks *vodka*, and arranges at her room little parties, euphemistically called "Athenian Nights."

Besides Tania, there are others—quite as depraved and vulgar. One of the most despicable of the group is Isaika Chuzhachok, the little Jewish Comsomol. He is obscene, inane, absurd, impudent, a wind-bag, a mess of banalities, catch-words, and undigested Communist phrases. Though sexually impotent he vociferates current platitudes "about the sex-question and free love." The heaviest count against him is that he prides himself on being a little Trotsky. "It is absolutely impossible to follow the logic of his thoughts, since he is a combination of all feelings, all ideas, all temperaments of what he is in all seriousness pleased to call 'an international nature.'"

Clearly, both Tania the peasant girl and Isaika the Jew are victims of conflicting trends in Soviet life. Torn

out of their respective native soils, they both were left adrift in pursuit of new attachments. There were no crystallized new taboos and conventions to steady their perilous course. Weak and morally unstable, both of them lapsed into the irresponsible bohemianism characteristic of uprooted creatures. They have left their class and race havens, but they have not been able to find a perfect substitute in Communism. They are neither bourgeois nor Communists, neither peasants nor proletarians, neither Jews nor Christians, they are everything, they are nothing, they are bohemians.

However, one must not exaggerate the seriousness and the inclusiveness of the evils of pessimism and hooliganism, and bohemianism. In reading the Russian press one must bear in mind the present Russian passion for self-criticism, a passion that often assumes the proportions of self-castigation. Individual cases do occur much too frequently to be overlooked, but they are not nearly so numerous as to suggest epidemic sweep. Rather than doubt and pessimism, the ailment with which the proletarian and Communist youth suffers most are literal-mindedness, a propensity toward too indiscriminate a rebellion against the "bourgeois" past, against its religion, philosophy, art, and morality, and too enthusiastic, uncritical and literal an adoption of Communist dogma. "It isn't our music—bad music—bad music!" says the young Communist Rodion in Fedin's *Brothers*. This youthful cock-sureness is certainly more typical of the Russians now than is the despair of a relatively small group of hypersensitive and hypercritical souls. Only "our" music is good music. Until recently this myopic view was characteristic of most of the proletarians. Life and the logic of events have modified this attitude considerably. As on the

military front, as on the economic front, so on the cultural front, too, the workers have begun to discover that they do not know enough, that they have to turn to the specialists for information and models. Instead of scornfully dismissing the old art, the proletarian has come to realize that he must first master it, and only then endeavor to transcend it. In his attempt to acquire the culture of the past he is often naïvely gullible and makes ludicrous errors. Essentially religious, he still creates idols and fetiches, except that now he reverently bares his head not before ikons and sacred relics but before science, scientific technique, scientific management, economic materialism. His comprehension of historical materialism is only too often crude; his application of the Marxian doctrine only too often absurd.

Take, for instance, the student hero Khorokhorin in Lev Gumilevski's novel *Dog Lane*—a Communist, a worshipper of science, and, naturally, an arch materialist. His materialism however is raw and muddled. The most complex human relationships and psychological enigmas he evaluates from a shallow zoological point of view. "We do not recognize any love," he remarks proudly. "This is bourgeois business, and it hampers our cause! It is the pastime of the satiated!" His motto is "Good Health and Efficiency." "Regular eating and drinking; regular hours of work, rest, and recreation; regular intercourse with women—this is the most important!" Unfortunately, in a world of passion and hatred and love and jealousy, in a world of inexplicable preferences and intuitive longings, of secret ailments and individual ambitions, such a simple formula is bound to entangle one in disastrous complications. In practice, Khorokhorin finds life infinitely more complex than his simple formula reckoned on. What he first justifies as

a natural need, gradually becomes an end in itself—fun, diversion, pleasure. He finds the path of “naked sensuality” exceedingly slippery, so much so that he ruins an innocent youngster who dies from an abortion; he contracts a shameful disease with which he infects his sweetheart; attempts murder and suicide; and from a brilliant student and good Communist degenerates into a morbid and anti-social creature. Khorokhorin is saved at the end, but that is a sop to the virtuous reader. The tragic element in the story is what interests us here. And Khorokhorin’s tragedy is a clear result of impervious literal-mindedness, of an immature, dogmatic, unintelligent use of materialistic doctrine, completely misinterpreted, as a guide to a new morality.

A more striking illustration of this point is the pathetic case of Niurochka and Alexander in Semenov’s novel *Natalia Tarpova*. Both Niurochka and Alexander are young, lovable; both are members of the Comsomol; both are striving toward a beautiful and free relationship; yet, owing to ignorance, inexperience and an inflexible philosophy, their lives are shattered; Niurochka is dying in a hospital after she had undergone an unsuccessful operation performed secretly by an ignorant midwife; Alexander is almost insane with grief.

“Do I understand, Comrade, that the two of you had intended to get married?” asked the doctor. “Well, if you didn’t want a child, that was your business. But how is it that you, a young Communist, have sent her to some ignorant midwife?”

“But it wasn’t I . . . Not I . . .”

“What do you mean—Not I?”

“It wasn’t I . . . not my child . . .”

“Not yours? But haven’t you just said that the two of you were about to get married?”

"We—we were . . . but it was not I," dully insisted the boy.

Alexander finally told the story:

"There was a little party—and it happened, accidentally. He himself saw it, with his own eyes, how it happened." Agitated, fearing that he might not be believed, Alexander kept on repeating in anguish that although it had happened and that he himself seen it, he nevertheless was sure that Niurochka loved him, really!—and that he loved Niurochka, and that, above all, Niurochka was a free woman, and that he had no right to forbid, for it was wrong to forbid; he, Alexander Timofeev was a Comsomol; and he therefore understood everything very well: it was wrong to forbid; yet they loved each other very much; and when Niurochka got well, they would certainly get married, but to forbid was wrong. . . . He had even consoled Niurochka when they walked home after the party; and then for a whole month his Niurochka cried and was gloomy, and then, without saying a word to him, she went to that witch. . . .

"Forgive me . . . forgive me!" screamed Niurochka in a terrible voice.

"For a moment, the blue-eyed boy was stunned by this cry. Then his face twitched. Falling on his knees before her couch, he put his hands on his Niurochka's ashen cheeks, and whispered fervently: 'But you are not guilty, but you are a free person. . . . Remember? I had told you, you were free! It would be wrong for me to forbid, wouldn't it?' "

"Save her! . . . Save her! . . ." he suddenly began to scream. But Niurochka was already dead.

Poor Alexander, unfortunate Niurochka—they had learned so many high-sounding phrases about "free

woman," "woman's rights," "down with the atavistic emotion of jealousy," that they became confused and utterly lost. Hence the tragedy.

But as we have seen in the story about the gold teeth, the bewildering effect of sudden light has its vastly comic as well as keenly tragic sides. It is certainly amusing to read in Fedin's *Brothers* the description of the young Russian's discovery of science. Professor Arseny Arsenievich, a character in Fedin's novel, in order to illustrate the worker's ignorant and wholesale acceptance of any dogma as long as it is handed to him under the alluring label of science, tells the following episode:

"Not long ago," says the Professor, "I received a telephone call from the Academy. 'Is it you, Arseny Arsenievich? I'm speaking for the circle before whom you had lectured the other day. . . . My fellow members have instructed me to find out—we had a little discussion here concerning God. We have grasped and accepted according to your lecture, how He originated, and that He does not exist. But, you see, we have here members who maintain that there is a soul. So I promised to find out from you, what you have to say according to science. Hello, Hello!' he yells, 'Can you hear me? Is there a soul or no?' 'No, I answer him through the phone, don't worry, there is nothing.' 'So this is what I should tell the boys?' 'This is just what you should tell them.' 'Well, thanks!' he replies, 'now the thing is clearer and easier. I am sorry I disturbed you in your scientific work. Bye-bye.'"

Many will laugh at the ignorant young worker who turns to the scientist for the solution of life's most vexing problem. Yet in Russia this is a wholesome sign. A land of darkness and obscurantism, a land that made Rasputins and Pobedonostsevs possible can well stand

a bit of science-worship. And workers who attend lectures, and discuss the eternal riddles of the universe, workers who are sorry to disturb a professor in his scientific work, are, for all their naïveté, a new and inspiring thing. Ah, some will object, but science is becoming vulgarized. The *sanctum sanctorum* of the Academies is being polluted by the presence of the great unwashed. In the words of the engineer in Semenov's *Natalia Tarpova*: "The nature of knowledge is such that it is always in the possession of the few. Knowledge is indivisible. It is not capital that can be distributed among the many and still remain the same in its totality. Where everyone knows a little, the sum total of knowledge is small."

Perhaps. Perhaps the supercilious engineer is right. There is however a little fallacy in his argument, for, unlike capital, knowledge nibbled from a professor's rich store does not diminish the professor's store. Knowledge is an emanation which does not deplete the source; it may even increase it.

Altogether, the engineer's dichotomy between brains and hands is purely artificial, a remnant of his aristocratic prepossessions, a revolt of the "I" against the "We," of the intellectual's ego against the mass. The engineer naturally resents the worker's exclamation, "We are the epoch! We are everything! We are the past millenia. We are the sum total of Man's Universe. We are the future! . . . Look. . . . Do you see the factory there? That factory—is it you, or is it we?" "It is I," replied the engineer earnestly. "No, it is we! It is we!"—shouted the worker triumphantly, "Every brick in that wall bears the trace of our hands. Every circle of its height has been measured by our labor. The factory is a thing—therefore, it is we! The world con-

sists of things and of us! Show one thing in this world that does not bear the imprint of the hands that created it. Everything that perished, everything that exists, everything that will exist—everything is our labor, power, energy, bears the imprint of these hands . . .” “And this brain,” retorted the engineer pointing to his own forehead. “Ha-ha-ha,——” laughed the worker. “The brain? Your knowledge? . . . Every sponge can absorb water. We have brains too!”

There is romance in this collective pride, in this “we have brains too!” But, as we have previously said, the individualist of the old régime can understand only a solo performance; he can admire only a “star.” Harmonization, symphonic performances, the exaltation of a quartet player are alien to him. Observe how mordant Rodion’s bourgeois’ wife grows when she speaks about the Communists:

“The longer I am with you, the more tired I become,” she says to her husband. “I am sick and tired of hearing you reiterate somebody else’s words. . . . You Communists are always cackling like hens about to lay eggs. And you, too, cackle like the rest of them; children must be educated along the lines of production processes; fairy-tales are remnants of superstition; religion is opium for the people; Volga falls into the Caspian Sea. God, what a bore. . . .”²¹

And how satirical Ehrenburg waxes when he describes the Communist worker Artem whose “wealth, like that of most people of the new generation, consists of a frank and shocking paucity of what we call ‘personal life’.” . . . “Speaking of him,” complains the writer, “one is compelled to speak of conferences, struggles with ban-

²¹ Fedin’s *Brothers*.

ditism, of the rehabilitation of Soviet industry, of anything you please, except those picturesque situations which put life into the pages of any novel. . . . Good Communists, we dare say, really have no biographies. And Artem was certainly a first class Communist. His feelings and actions were dictated not so much by Party instructions as by the collective will, not expressed in words, but tangible nevertheless—by that will that piles up ant-heaps, that makes cranes fly in triangular formation, that impels cyclopean edifices and man's new social structure. It is enough to know a fact and the attitudes of ten Communists toward that fact, and we cannot possibly make a mistake as to the attitude of the eleventh, in this case of Artem. . . . He was, of course, one of the first members of the Time League, wasting in his fanatical ardor no little time in preaching the saving of time. Still we must not think that he was a perfectly wound mechanism. More than once was he torn away from his books by the mysterious stirrings resulting from the bronchial sounds of a street organ. Watching the kids play war and execution near Gogol's statue, he invariably experienced the strongest desire to go over and stroke their shaggy little heads, but he was shy to display his clumsy tenderness. He was fond of good weather, fast horseback riding, and the odor of daffodils. Atavistic impulses were powerful in this young and healthy man. As regards love—he considered it a myth, no more real than the immaculate conception or Plato's cosmology, a myth as exploded as the miracle-working relics of the saints. This does not mean that he was ascetic. The moderate but clearly-felt sex needs of the average man living in mid-European climate and not stimulated by alcohol and narcotics would occasionally bring him together with women. At such moments he

was quiet and serious. He detested pornographic jokes. He did not know the language of kisses! . . . His casual girl-friends he never remembered. On the other hand, he was an excellent comrade. As in the regiment, so in the academy he gained many devoted friends; for their sakes he repeatedly endangered his life as simply and naturally as if he were offering sugar or a cigarette."

This portrait of Artem is coldly schematic. The bourgeois author has not creatively identified himself with the Communist worker. He simply uses his grey collectivist virtues, at which he is inclined to poke fun, as a contrast to the radiant, mischievous, adventurous, irresponsible individualist and naturally fascinating rogue of a hero who is the Communist's brother. The essential traits, however, are there. Seen in a different plane, Artem's devotion, and tenderness, and industry, and social-nature are not quite so grey as Ehrenburg and Fedin would make us believe. With all their lopsided materialism, there is something refreshingly wholesome about Rodion and Artem.

It is in perfect keeping with the whole tenor of Soviet pioneering conditions that a youth like the Communist undergraduate in Ogniev's Diary should take the loss of his sweetheart less intensely than a young man in a more established, less exacting milieu. When his sweetheart goes off with another man, Kostya reflects: "It's important to look at one's self objectively. With Sylva, something big and bright and important has gone out of my life. Why? I've asked myself a thousand times. There are thousands of girls who are better than Sylva, but Sylva has been my most intimate friend and I have let her slip. . . . Life has been rushing past me, while I've just kept on contemplating myself. . . . What's wanted is action not contemplation. One's got to put



Race (Y. Pimenov)

up a fight—and it's no good getting excited over little things. . . . To hell with that—it's life that must be conquered!

"To hell with degenerate reflections!

"I must work, and keep control over myself and the life around me; I must be constructive, not contemplative." The older Russian heroes, the Hamlets, had no other outlet for their energies except contemplation. "But there is an outlet for my energies," exclaims the Undergraduate, "Science, Socialism, Struggle!"

THE DOMESTIC FRONT

From what has already been said of Tania, and Khorokhorin, and Alexander, and Niurochka, and Artem, and Korsuntsev, and the Communist Undergraduates, the reader has not failed to notice that one of the most perplexing psychological problems confronting the Soviet youth at present is the matter of sex relations. Khorokhorin's and Artem's escape into a cold matter-of-factness is, of course, no solution. Ages of accumulated sentiment, the halo of romance, and mystery, and ecstasy about love have too potent a hold on man's imagination. Moreover, sheer matter-of-factness is not conducive to a wholesome, monogamous family life; and no one who has observed conditions in Russia will deny that the monogamous family is still the overwhelmingly prevalent form, despite the increasing number of divorces. True, the family has become infinitely more elastic, marital relations more fluid, the women immeasurably more self-assertive but from this it does not at all follow that monogamy is doomed. It is scarcely imaginable that the "naked sensuality" of a Khorokhorin can become the basis of sex life without leading to de-

generation, weakness, disease. . . . As against this, Communist morality according to the Comsomol Senka (in *Dog Lane*) must primarily "serve the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat! Communist morality is a system calculated to aid the toiler's struggle against exploitation! The good of Communist morality is to be of use to the revolution, is to strengthen and insure the triumph of Communism. What is useful for the Revolution is moral; what is harmful is immoral and insufferable. . . ."

Thus the question arises: are abortions, and matter-of-factness, and looseness and zoology in sex, useful to the Revolution. The answer is again supplied by Senia.

"From the point of view of the proletariat and the class struggle, that is immoral which tends to weaken us as fighters, undermine our will to build a new world, interfere with our achieving our direct purpose! If a disorderly sex life which begins too early and which degenerates into sex disease undermines us physically and mentally, poisons our will, leads us along the crooked path of sex excess, then it is immoral. . . . But continence, resistance to the lures of the naked sex instinct, a comradely attitude toward the loved woman—this is the highest type of Communist sex relations—this is the foundation of our sex morality. . . ."

Out of the turmoil and brutishness and license of the early years, the Revolution, it seems, is beginning to evolve its own code of morals. A definite attempt is made to use social pressure as a counterfoil to the latitude offered by the Soviet law. Plays and stories and poems and articles and speeches are being produced in appalling quantities—and their main burden is to prove the necessity for a stern Communist morality.

One play which I saw performed in a Moscow theatre

for workers during the summer of 1928, is a study in contrasts. On one hand, we have the villain, who is handsome, but a bad Communist, a Don Juan, an inefficient worker, a spendthrift, an unfaithful husband, who demands that his wife perform an abortion; on the other hand, there is the hero—modest, quiet, devoted, efficient, faithful, who saves the villain's wife and unborn child from the latter's clutches and who is a model Communist. The same kind of plot, and the same kind of moral characterizes the Soviet play *Red Rust* (produced by the Theatre Guild in New York City), Bogdanov's *First Girl*, Brazhnin's *Leap*, Kollontai's *Love of Three Generations*, and others.

The final moral criterion is revolutionary usefulness. However, if you attempt to apply to any specific act the acid test of revolutionary utility, of whether or not it is conducive to the development of a collectivist society, you find yourself in a dilemma. And if Senka and the authors of the plays mentioned reach the conclusion that restraint and continence are the moral desiderata in a proletarian society, we have a different point of view presented in Karpov's novel, *Fifth Love*, where the scene is laid in the village. There, the reader will recall, the attorney for the defense insists that the accused, Sergey Medvediev, "in cohabiting with one, or two, or three women helps disrupt the traditional peasant family and in so doing is actually rendering a service to society and Communist Revolution." From the fact that in the village "the party-member and the Comsomol constitute the explosive elements in the conservative peasant family," he comes to the startling conclusion that the present form of family does not fit the new life," and that "new forms must begin to crystallize."

The new conditions and the coming "collective village economy" will smash the old family into bits.

The attorney's claim that in the village "the Party-members and the Comsomol constitute the explosive elements of the family is amply borne out by countless stories of village life.

An excellent illustration of this is Pantelaimon Romanov's fascinating story *Black Fritters*, where we see the peasant Andrey, a Communist, leave his wife and children and go to the city where he studies and becomes an important man in a factory, and where he enters into intimate relations with a girl Communist. The news of Andrey's love affair reaches his wife, Katerina, who, though she receives money from Andrey regularly, becomes infuriated at the suspicion that most of Andrey's money goes to the support of a "swell," "dressed up" city wench. Katerina, impelled by savage jealousy, rushes to the city, intent on making a scandal: "Let people see that he was a scoundrel and a cad. . . . She would smash the window-panes—and with her bare hands, too, so that there might be blood. And she would tear the other woman's hair out."

To Katerina's amazement Andrey is not in the least embarrassed by her arrival. He receives her with open arms, is gentle, and kind, and comforting; while the "other woman" turns out to be a thin, emaciated office girl, in worn shoes, considerate, hospitable, without the slightest consciousness of guilt. Katerina is nonplussed and disarmed. She doesn't understand. She wonders, "what has he found in her? She is flat-chested." Gradually her jealousy subsides; unconsciously she feels the beauty of Andrey's attitude toward the girl. It is touching to see how the three go to sleep in the same room, how the girl makes Katerina's bed, and how

Katerina, in an effort to say something polite, mutters, "why should you bother yourself? I can lie down on the floor." But the most touching part of the story is Katerina's offering the girl a package of black fritters which she had brought with her. In the morning Andrey gives Katerina some money, and he and the girl escort her to the station. At the last moment a wave of jealousy sweeps over Katerina; she even hesitates, as if ready to return. But she remembers the thin, weak hands of the girl and her confused, caressing smile. Waving her hand in final farewell, Katerina crosses herself, and goes her way.

But the initiative toward the dissolution of unsatisfactory marital ties is taken not only by the man; it is often, indeed more often, taken by the newly emancipated young woman, whose sudden realization of her human dignity is one of the very important factors in the modification of the old family. This is particularly perceptible in the village, where before the revolution the woman lived in abject subjection to the man. As a result of woman's awakening, male supremacy, sanctified by age-long tradition, is seriously shaken.

The peasant woman cast off the ancient marital yoke and proclaims her independence. She categorically refuses to honor and obey. The husband is distracted: "The male sparrow pecks his wife; the rooster pecks his wife—then why shouldn't Filimonov do the same? Damn these new ways! That's what a *muzhik* is for, to lord it over his wife! How can it be otherwise? If you don't beat your horse, will it pull? If you don't beat your wife, will she obey?"²² But the Lukerias, the Virineas, and Maryas are not persuaded by such reasoning.

²² *Andron the Shiftless*, by Alexander Neverov.

" 'Don't you shout at me, Ivan,' says Lukeria to her husband.

"The floor slips under Ivan's feet, the house seems to turn upside down. He swings his arm to strike her. Lukeria grasps his arm:

" 'Don't you beat me any more, Ivan.'

"The man is dazed:

" 'Why shouldn't I beat you?'

" 'I am sick and tired of your beatings. It's six years we're married, and I never yet heard a kind word from you.'

"Ivan is utterly bewildered:

"No, that is not his woman, not the woman he has been married to for six years, it is not the voice of his woman. To be sure, it's her nose; her freckles, all right, but Lukeria is gone. It's not Lukeria who stands before him—it's a cat! And her eyes burn like those of a cat!"

Gone are the genteel, pale, prim, tender, heroically dutiful, splendidly feminine ladies of the past. Where is Pushkin's Tatiana, or Turgenev's Liza, or Tolstoi's Natasha, or Chekhov's three sisters? The new woman in Soviet literature is aggressive, stubborn, self-willed; she can fight too, like her male comrade, and she can shoot; she is somewhat loud, rather masculine; she is passionately active and "functions energetically."

Take Neverov's Marya (in *Marya the Bolshevik*). She refuses to be at the beck and call of her exiguous and irascible husband. To the utter dismay of her puny mate, and to the inexpressible amazement of the old village, this peasant woman learns how to read and write, becomes socially active, initiates study courses and a "Woman's Department," and even manages to be elected to the village Soviet. "Later," narrates Neverov, "we came to the Soviet to take a look at her. We didn't

recognize her. She had put in a table there, an ink-stand, two pencils, a blue one and red one—a secretary stood in front of her with papers. She glanced swiftly over the lines of those papers. ‘Is this,’ she asked, ‘about the food question, Comrade Yeremeyev?’ ”

“ ‘Yes.’ ”

“She wrote her name on the paper and then again, like an office manager, ‘Are the lists ready? Finish them quickly.’ We didn’t believe our eyes. This was our Marya! And she didn’t even blush once.” We are not surprised when we see Marya leave her dolt of a husband and go off to the city.

From what has already been said with regard to marriage and the family, it should be obvious that the difficulties encountered by the Revolution on the “domestic front” are infinitely more perplexing and intricate than those on the “economic front.” Here the obstacle is largely psychological. Intellectually a man may be a devoted Communist; yet that may not, and most likely will not, prevent him from feeling along old conventional patterns. Civil war in one’s psyche is much more cruel and exhausting than the struggles in the political and economic fields. In Gladkov’s *Cement*, the hero, Gleb, succeeds in re-starting the factory against tremendous odds, but he fails to re-establish the old family. A thorough-going Communist worker, he still expects his wife Dasha to be the old-fashioned woman—wife, mother, cook. But Dasha has changed. Three years of Party activity have left an indelible impression on her. She is intellectually free, and economically independent. Dasha insists on a single standard of morality. She tells him frankly that she had been intimate with other men, particularly with the Communist Badin, and forces Gleb to admit that during his three years absence from home

he too had been unfaithful and had known other women.

With the death of her child, she leaves Gleb in order that she may function unhampered as a free woman, and as a social and Party worker. Gleb, the Communist, fails to understand Dasha's motive for leaving him. "But what is there to understand, Gleb?" says Dasha. "The old Dasha—I can never be again. To be merely a wife for the bed—I am not fit . . .

"I don't know, Gleb, perhaps I never loved you . . . and it may be that I . . . You I love, Gleb; that's true—but perhaps I love others too . . . I don't know, Gleb, everything is smashed and broken up. . . . Love must somehow be changed . . ."

Gleb is overwhelmed—he is torn by the "atavistic" emotion of jealousy toward the comrade who had possessed his wife. Ultimately, however, Gleb transcends his jealousy. In the exultation over the re-starting of the works, the two enemies shake hands. The personal is submerged in the general, the individual in the social. Together with Gleb's victory on the economic front, there is the great victory of both enemies on the "psychological" front. For both have come to realize that "somehow love must be changed."

However love may be changed, and whatever form the family may ultimately evolve into, to the Communist one thing is certain—it will not be a replica of the old family. Communal kitchens, communal laundries, nurseries, woman's economic independence, equal pay for equal work, woman education, enlightened birth control, the shift of the center of man's and woman's life from the domestic hearth to the club and the factory, the coöperative and the lecture hall, the square, and the sport grounds, and the theatre are certain to affect in some basic way marital relations.

With all other considerations eliminated, and with woman completely emancipated, marriage, believes the Communist, will probably develop into a wholly free, physical and spiritual companionship based on a deep mutual affinity and on a single standard of morality. Relationships of this sort, though absolutely free, will probably be more lasting than our present day "monogamous" marriage. They will afford greater joy and greater fulfillment than the gross economic transaction which for the most part marriages in Capitalist society certainly are.

For in the words of the Comsomol Senka, "The proletarian Revolution is above all the awakening of the human personality! The Revolution, in spite of the occasional cruelty and ruthlessness of its methods, is above all the awakening of humaneness; its progress means a growing respect for human dignity, a growing sympathy for the weak and the weakest. The Revolution is no revolution if it does not do everything in its power and within its means to help woman, doubly and trebly oppressed, if it does not enable her to advance along the road of individual and social development! The Revolution is no revolution if it does not devote its greatest attention to our children: for they are the future in whose name Revolution is created. . . ."

CHAPTER III

THE SOVIET THEATRE

by Louis Lozowick and Joseph Freeman

The World War had a disastrous effect on the Russian theatre. From the artistic point of view the seasons of 1915-16 were exceedingly weak. War-weary spectators lowered the standards of thought and art, and the Russian theatre became more and more a place for light amusement and rest. The leaders of the pre-revolutionary theatre felt that the ground was tottering under their feet. Stanislavski's Moscow Art Theatre, for instance, deliberately refrained from new productions, preferring to maintain its achievements without lowering its standards. Others, like the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre, preferred to work in the privacy of their laboratories; but during the theatrical season preceding the Revolution, even the First Studio did not produce a single new play.

The exhausted middle-class and aristocratic audiences which filled the theatres had no desire for new dramatic attempts or the treatment of social and moral problems. Serious playwrights like Alexei Tolstoi began to write light comedy, crushed by the utter failure of literary plays to produce an effect. The unique Meyerhold was isolated in Petrograd with a few experimental plays, and a similar solitude overwhelmed the esthetic theatre under Tairov's direction.

In general, experiments in the theatre interested only

a handful of highly trained intellectuals. What the audiences wanted were sex plays, and not plays dealing with social or philosophical questions. Things went from bad to worse, and on the eve of the February Revolution Tairov's theatre was compelled to close and the Moscow Art Theatre was ominously silent.

The revolution of February, 1917, liberated the Russian theatre to a certain extent. The abolition of the czarist censorship initiated a revival of forbidden plays, such as *Salome* and *Paul I*; but the new freedom had its evil sides. There was a flood of pornographic plays, many of them dealing with Rasputin and the Romanov family. The more advanced elements in the theatre moved in another direction, however. They demanded that the theatres, hitherto restricted to the upper classes and the bourgeoisie, be opened to the people; they insisted that artistic anarchy be stopped. Various experiments were tried. Without an esthetic or political program a Soviet Theatre of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants Deputies was founded early in 1917. In Moscow the Soviet of Workers Deputies turned over a well-known opera house to Komissarjevski, a director of the new school. As the idea of democratic self-government gained ground, the actors, scenic artists and stage hands in a number of theatres started to fight the theatrical managers.

Little was accomplished, however, until the Bolshevik Revolution.

The theatre, which is among the most social of the arts, and in which the audience is such a determining factor, felt the shock of the October Revolution much more profoundly than that of the February Revolution. The Bolshevik Revolution stood the old social order on its head, as it were. It brought to the theatre a new

audience—an audience of insurgent masses: soldiers, workers and peasants who were indifferent to the old spiritual and moral problems that agitated the pre-War liberal or introspective intellectual, and who were definitely hostile to the degenerate War theatre. This audience had its own struggles to wage and required plays dealing with its own problems.

On the other hand, when the new Soviet state began to reorganize the theatre, it found itself dealing with an institution burdened with a culture more than two hundred years old, an art in which the contradictions of contemporary life were most glaringly revealed. The collective nature of the theatre, uniting as it does a whole group of people in creative work, hampered coöperation between the theatre and the Revolution. It was easier to win over a single artist to the Revolution, than a whole group of artists who had up to then been strangers to it.

Nevertheless, during War Communism the theatre assumed a leading rôle among the arts. It was nationalized and, together with the other arts, placed under the direction of the Commissariat of Education, whereby the Soviet government directly influenced the masses of workers. Various economic conditions, which affected all the arts, stimulated the growth of the Soviet theatre. For example, the shortage of paper during the civil wars made it impossible to publish fiction on a wide scale; graphic artists were compelled to specialize in drawing posters; composers found no market; the cinema was struggling with the lack of technical equipment. The theatre alone had the means to develop without restriction. Plays were improvised and produced in military camps between battles, in workers clubs, in villages, in formal theatres. Everywhere there were theoretical disputes, a

battle of the arts, centering in the themes which the new revolutionary theatre should choose for the new audience; the language which the new stage should use to express the new epoch; the technical methods for influencing the masses. The theatre ceased to be a place for mere entertainment and became a cultural and political weapon. When the theatres were first nationalized, tickets were distributed almost exclusively among trade union members at a purely nominal price. This brought into the theatre an audience, for which it was so new, that it swallowed everything with equal delight.

In its desire to give the theatre some unity consistent with the aims of the Revolution, the Commissariat of Education worked out a program whose basic policy was to make the stage an organic part of the Soviet State, which could be used for propaganda, recreation and enlightenment. The theatre was to become one of the instruments for creating a Communist world. Shortly after the October Revolution, the Commissariat organized a Department of Theatre Education which appointed a commission of propagandists exercising strict control over theatrical productions. This commission enforced a severe censorship; no play could be produced unless chosen by the commission. This system so seriously interfered with the development of the theatre that the commission was abolished and a new one appointed in 1921. The new commission consisted of four theatrical directors, representing the leading tendencies of the Soviet theatre.

THE ACADEMIC THEATRES

There were three such tendencies. The Right tendency was represented by the old academic theatres, such

as the Moscow Art Theatre and some of the studios which it founded. It included theatres which sprang up after the introduction of the New Economic Policy in 1921, catering to the new bourgeois elements. The Center tendency was represented by theatres like Tairov's Kamerny Theatre and Granovski's Jewish Kamerny Theatre; while the Left tendency found its chief representatives in Meyerhold's Theatre, the Proletcult Theatre, the Blue Blouse, the Theatre of the Moscow Trade Unions, workers' club theatres, peasant theatres and various satirical theatres.

These tendencies in the Soviet theatre mirrored the struggle of classes during the transition period. The Right group, for example, consisting mainly of members of the old liberal intelligentsia, was fundamentally rooted in the culture of the nineteenth century; it defended the tenets of academic and traditional art. This group, notably the Moscow Art Theatre, had a long and difficult way to travel before it could accept the Revolution. The Centre group, representing esthetic and bohemian sections of the intelligentsia, accepted the Revolution gratefully, because it liberated their own creative powers. The Left group demanded a complete break with the past, and the creation of a theatre based wholly on contemporary life. The Left theatres declared they were against preserving the old theatre as if it were a museum. They even refused to attempt to improve it to meet the needs of the Revolution, but insisted on a theatre that would have a clean start.

The old academic theatres functioned in the Soviet Union as a kind of anachronism at first. The Revolution created a vast quantity of new material which was strange to them. They could not master this material because they could not understand the Revolution; it



Portrait of an Actor (*P. V. Williams*)

meant too great a cultural break with the past, and their first reaction was to mark time. As an example, we may take the Moscow Art Theatre, chief among the academic theatres of Russia.

THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE

The Moscow Art Theatre was the creation of the liberal bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. The Russian bourgeoisie was liberal as compared with the feudalism of the Czarist bureaucracy. Fighting for its own emancipation and expansion, the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois intellectuals looked to Western Europe as their model, anxious to emulate its culture. Russian magnates furnished the means; the Russian intelligentsia furnished the brains. One of the cultural institutions that emerged from this union was the Moscow Art Theatre, organized by the combined efforts of Stanislavski and Nemirovitch-Dantchenko. Stanislavski was the leader of a group of amateur actors performing occasionally before the Society for Art and Literature in the plays of Tolstoi, Gutzkov and Shakespeare. Nemirovitch-Dantchenko was a playwright, novelist and manager of the dramatic section in the Philharmonic School, producing with his pupils Ibsen, Hauptmann, Tchekhov. When the two men met in 1897 they found they had many ideas and interests in common. They decided to organize a new theatre, obtained a subsidy and united their pupils into one troupe, among whom were actors who became celebrated later in Russia and abroad. With Stanislavski came Lilina, Sanine and Burdjalov; with Nemirovitch-Dantchenko came Moskvin, Knipper and Meyerhold. The Moscow Art Theatre was opened in 1898 with Alexei Tolstoi's *Czar Feodor Ivanovitch*, which proved an im-

mediate success. Then came plays by Hauptmann, Ibsen, Tchekhov, Gorki and Shakespeare, which soon created for the Moscow Art a leading place among the Russian theatres.

Method The method of the Moscow Art Theatre is that of naturalism; it aims at objective truth in speech, action, and surroundings—everything as close to real life as is possibly consistent with stage conventions. Their first model in this was Cronegk and his Meiningen company which visited Russia some years prior to the founding of the Moscow Art Theatre. Cronegk's ideal was to reproduce historic or contemporary reality as accurately as possible. The actors of the theatre also learned to forget there was an audience in front of them and to imagine they were actually living that slice of life which their play reproduced. The method of the Moscow Art Theatre aimed to make the audience, moreover, forget it was witnessing a stage play; the audience must imagine it was witnessing actual life. To achieve this, an elaborate naturalistic technique was evolved. If the Russia of Czar Feodor was represented, then the exact historic costumes and architecture of the period were studied with scholarly and photographic accuracy, to be faithfully reproduced on the stage. If the Rome of Caesar was the theme, then Rome was to be studied on the spot. If the play required it, living dogs were made to bark, living birds to sing. The Theatre even went to the length of trying to eliminate the inevitably open fourth wall by casting the shadow of a window from the audience on to the stage to create the illusion that the fourth wall actually existed. One of the most important innovations, from the standpoint of stage effect and influence on other theatres, was the method of ensemble in which the part of every actor was given equal attention; in which acting, setting

and speech were to form a unity. To exclude anything that might interfere with the impression of real life, no applause was permitted, no music between the acts.

During the first years of its history the Moscow Art Theatre exhibited a powerful realism, an aggressive individualism tempered by a certain mild liberalism of thought and a charitable disposition towards the lower strata of society. It was the time of Ibsen, Hauptmann, and Alexei Tolstoi. Then came the Revolution of 1905, the failure of which initiated a period of penitence by the intelligentsia for its revolutionary sins—a period of disillusion, suffered with a desire to escape from reality, and a tendency to introspection. It was during this period that Tchekhov and the Symbolists reached the height of their vogue. Tchekhov is generally considered the most typical author of the Moscow Art Theatre, and it is in his honor that the sea gull adorns the programs and curtains of the Theatre, although one might safely identify this symbol also with Maeterlinck's *Bluebird*. In Tchekhov's plays the Russian intellectuals saw as in a mirror their own impotence, passivity and despair. When the theatre turned to symbolism, to Maeterlinck's *Bluebird*, Andrejev's *Life of Man*, Hamsun's *Drama of Life*, it plunged with the rest of the intelligentsia into that never-never land where the exhausted soul could find refuge. Although in each of these phases the Theatre varied its philosophic approach to life, it always clung to its naturalistic method of production.

In 1917 came the October Revolution bringing one of the most radical changes in the world, nationalizing the theatres, opening them to a new audience which found no interest in hair-splitting self-analysis, except in a negative sense. But the Revolution seemed to make no difference to the Moscow Art Theatre, which continued

to perform the old plays in the old manner. At the request of the new government, however, the Moscow Art Theatre played more often those of its productions which had some meaning in the new epoch, especially the plays of Ostrovski. But in general, for five or six years after the Revolution, the Moscow Art Theatre produced over and over again plays like the *Bluebird*, the *Cherry Orchard*, *Drama of Life* and *Czar Feodor*. In 1922 the Moscow Art Theatre left for a trip through Europe and America, where it continued the same work in much the same way, bringing into the repertoire a few plays without much contemporary significance.

In 1925-26, when the troupe was back in Moscow, it showed signs of contemporary life which, however, brought with them a somewhat unpleasant surprise. Its very first play with a truly contemporary theme and message had an unmistakable counter-revolutionary odor, though feigning political neutrality. This play, *The Days of the Turbin* by Bulgakov, portrays the life of White Guards, intending to show their human side, to prove that while there may be villains among them, there are also humane, loving, self-sacrificing idealists. As if anybody ever denied that White Guards could be good fathers and lovers, good shots and good drinkers! Their menace as a class is very cleverly glossed over and a smoke screen of domestic bliss (not omitting the Christmas tree) is presented on the stage for the consolation of those who may still sigh for the good old days. And yet, though the Soviet government could have removed it by a simple gesture, the play was permitted to run. Of course, there was a great uproar. *The Days of the Turbins* may be only fiction, but the days of Yudenitch, Denikin and Wrangel are not yet forgotten. Whether

or not this commotion had anything to do with it, one of the next plays of a contemporary nature produced by the Moscow Art Theatre, was opposite in spirit. *The Armored Train*, by Vsevolod Ivanov, relates an incident in the Russian civil wars, a struggle of the Reds and Whites for the possession of the train. The guerilla warfare is pictured graphically, leading to the final victory of the Reds. In the last few years the Moscow Art Theatre, while still continuing with its classic repertoire, is giving more and more attention to the life of today, and showing less and less political neutrality, thus falling in line with practically all the other Russian theatres.

More pliable as to matter and manner were the Studios of the Moscow Art Theatre. These grew up as preparatory schools for young actors, and eventually won an independent existence. The first Moscow Art Theatre Studio was established in 1905 by Meyerhold. It aimed at radical changes in acting, staging and theme; but the Russo-Japanese war prevented its being opened. Nevertheless, it sowed the seeds for many future theatrical experiments. The next Studio came in 1913, directed first by Soulerjitzki, who carried Stanislavski's system of naturalism to extremes, and later by Vakhtangov.

Another Studio eventually became the Musical Studio directed by Nemirovitch-Dantchenko, whose aim was to reform the art of lyric opera, liberate it from accumulated clichés and routine, and train a synthetic actor who could sing as well as act, dance as well as recite. The training comprised much of Stanislavski's system of ensemble, inner psychologic justification, unity of impression. The settings, on the other hand, lacked any sort of unity. At this Musical Studio, Lecocq's *The Daughter of Madame Angot* was done by Madame Gortinskaya, who achieved a faithful historic reproduction of eight-

eenth century France with all the quaintness of historic perspective. Offenbach's *La Perichole* was done by Kontchalovski, who brought in his own Cézannesque style with a flood of color and light. The settings by Rabinovitch for Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* were a clever adaptation of the Constructivist manner, a simple, architectural, revolving structure of columns and platforms, effective from every angle.

VAKHTANGOV'S THEATRE

Probably the most important of all the Moscow Art Theatre Studios was that which still bears the name of Vakhtangov. Beginning his career with Stanislavski, Vakhtangov eventually became one of the most prominent men in the Russian theatre. Vakhtangov joined the Moscow Art Theatre in 1910, and stayed with it until 1914. For the next three years he did a great amount of directing, and also taught at several of the Moscow Art Theatre Studios in the best Stanislavski tradition. Among his productions were plays by Ibsen, Hauptmann and Maeterlinck. In 1914 he first came into contact with the work of Meyerhold, another pupil of Stanislavski, but the effect of this contact was not to appear till some years later. When the October Revolution came, Vakhtangov accepted it almost immediately and his esthetic views at once underwent a change. "Art must go with the people," he said. "The artist must *rise* to the people. . . . When the Revolution marches forward and the red trail of its stormy steps burns up the border line which divides the world into 'before' and 'after,' how can it fail to touch the artist's heart?"

The Soviet government invited Vakhtangov to join the theatrical section of the Commissariat of Education;

he helped to organize the People's Theatre, played for it and was more than ever active as a teacher and organizer. When he was put in charge of the theatrical directors' section in the Commissariat of Education, he at once began to devise grandiose plans for a directors' collegium and the creation of a People's Theatre in which the leading theatres of all tendencies were to give their performances. But he became seriously ill and could not carry out these plans. Gradually he reached the conclusion that naturalism was incompatible with the new social order. Instead of naturalism he proclaimed the doctrine of theatricality. This new orientation led to a thorough revision of one of his former productions, *The Miracle of St. Anthony*, and to several new productions, among the best in the last decade. Before the Revolution, Vakhtangov's philosophy was colored with a little of Tolstoian pacifism. He felt that no play should be so performed as to offend the sensibilities of the audience. Accordingly, in his first version of Maeterlinck's *The Miracle* Vakhtangov only intended the audience to feel sorry for the spiritual debasement of the characters. But when the Revolution brought a new audience with a new attitude towards life, the play had to be given a new conception. The characters were now shown as living in a world of clerical hypocrisy, and bourgeois greed. Not sympathy but scorn was to emanate from the audience. Hence, the play was produced as a theatrical grotesque. Strindberg's *Eric XIV* was produced in a similar manner. This new manner was what Vakhtangov called "theatrical realism." It comprised three factors: first, every play must be given a special form; second, it must be viewed from a contemporary standpoint; and third, it must be produced by the characteristic methods of theatrical collectivity. Vakhtangov saw

in Stanislavski and Meyerhold two leaders who in their separate personalities possessed certain elements of the greatest value for the theatre as well as certain defects. Stanislavski's naturalism fought human platitudes, but it also crippled theatrical values. On the other hand, Meyerhold's conventionalism fought theatrical platitudes but it also crippled emotional truth. Vakhtangov believed that both emotional truths and theatrical values were necessary. Emotional expression must be true but it must be delivered in theatrical form. Hence, the first requirement of any theatre was mastery of theatrical technique, of bodily rhythm, of emotions, of plasticity in gesture and position.

Probably Vakhtangov's most important production was Gozzi's *Turandot*. Out of this comedy of masques, Vakhtangov attempted to create a spectacle which was new, original and contemporary. Evidently a modern audience living in the very midst of civil war and famine could not take the sad and naïve fairy tale of *Turandot* seriously. A modern audience could only smile at it indulgently, enjoying its make-believe as an adult enjoys the pranks of a child. At the rise of the curtain the actors file upon the stage in evening dress without costume or make-up, bow to the audience, tell them what parts they are going to play. The music strikes up a chord, the performance starts, and the actors pick up various objects with which they proceed to dress themselves for the parts. Towels serve as beards, a table cloth as a cloak, a tennis ball as a sceptre. An orchestra of the weirdest combination—*balalaikas*, mandolins, flute—led by plain combs and tissue paper, accompanies the action. Vakhtangov directed that "everything in this spectacle must sound like improvisation" and the actors must never forget to remind the audience that it is after

all nothing but a play. From earnest tones they suddenly pass to mock expressions. Contemporary anecdotes and allusions are introduced. Parts of the story are parodied by pantomime—actors impersonating other actors. The whole thing is sparkling, gay, brilliant, rollicking, but all rhythmically organized. The diction is resonant, the spirit of impromptu reigns throughout. The settings by Nivinski (who worked with Vakhtangov on *Eric XIV*) are somewhat like part of a circus arena, a round wall as background with gates and balconies. The floor slants from proscenium to backstage. There are smaller blocks and platforms from which one could build an arch, a balcony, a trapeze for exercises of every kind. *Turandot* was an instant success and is still one of the favorite pieces of the Moscow theatres.

Vakhtangov died prematurely in 1922. His Studio continued in his tradition, though not always with equally happy results. Among the more significant of its productions was a dramatization of *Virinea* by Seifulina, portraying the contemporary Russian village.

Soviet dramatic critics point out that Vakhtangov depicted the rebirth of a man in the world of events—much as Vakhtangov himself was seized by the swing of the Revolution and was born anew under its influence. Vakhtangov listened to the Revolution as the poet Alexander Blok in his day had advised every artist to do. His scenic creations had much in common with Blok's lyric poetry. His belief in the fusion of form with the needs of the Revolution is well expressed in his statement that "the Revolution demands that we have good voices; for only by a masterful and sharp form is it possible to express a theme without detracting from it."

One of Vakhtangov's conspicuous achievements was his work with the Habima players, notably *The Dibbuk*.

This mystic tragedy of love and predestination was produced with all of Vakhtangov's predilection for the grotesque and fantastic, in a manner so finished as to be unapproached by the English, French and other productions which have since then made this play universally known. The Habima Theatre had existed since 1907, but rose to greatest prominence only after the Revolution. It was organized by a small group of nationalist Jewish intellectuals and its performances were given in ancient Hebrew, a language as remote from Yiddish as Gaelic is from English. Hebrew is not understood by the overwhelming majority of Jews, consequently its appeal is restricted to a spiritual aristocracy. Among the plays in the Habima's repertoire were *The Wandering Jew* by Pinsky, *The Golem* by Leivick and *The Flood* by Berger. The Habima Theatre players visited the United States several years ago. Subsequently it broke up and groups of its players are now scattered in several countries.

The Habima had numerous parallels in the theatres of the national minorities. The Soviet policy of national cultural autonomy led to a great revival and efflorescence of cultural life among the hundred and more smaller nationalities and tribes composing the Soviet Union. According to this policy, every nationality not only has the right to use its own language and develop its own culture, but can also count on the State for active support in the exercise of this right. The result has been an activity which extended from the creation of new alphabets for the more primitive groups, to the establishment of institutions of higher learning among the more advanced. Especially noteworthy was the progress in the theatre. The Tartar, the Ukrainian, the Jewish and other National Theatres contributed their

share to the variety and riches of the Russian theatre. The Jewish State Theatre of Moscow may be taken as one of the best examples of this development.

JEWISH KAMERNY THEATRE

This theatre had its beginning in Leningrad during 1918-19. At that time A. M. Granovski returned from the west, where he had worked with Reinhardt and become thoroughly familiar with the European theatre. He proceeded to establish the Jewish Theatrical Studio. Six months of training resulted in a repertoire including plays by Ash, Maeterlinck and others, staged along progressive lines of European tradition. In 1920 the Studio moved to Moscow. In the capital, with its excellent theatres and a growing Jewish population, the young group found a more congenial atmosphere and turned more definitely to Jewish material. As economic conditions improved and the actors polished their art, the group moved to larger quarters. Here the theatre developed that technique which distinguished its subsequent productions. The entire theatrical apparatus was recreated. The actor was made to undergo a long and rigorous training until he became so complete a master of his physique and emotions that he could easily and deliberately pass from one rôle to another. To give the actor the widest freedom, stage settings resembling flat easel paintings were abolished, and three dimensional settings built up on many levels took their place. Since there were no suitable contemporary plays, Granovski had no scruples in reshaping old plays to meet the needs of the day.

The Jewish Kamerny Theatre's first performance of *Uriel Acosta* along these lines surpassed all its previous

efforts; with its second production, *The Sorceress* by Abraham Goldfaden, it reached one of the highest points in its history. In *The Sorceress*, Granovski produced a spectacle "according to Goldfaden." He took the popular sentimental melodrama about a poor orphan who suffers and is saved, cleared it of all accumulated rubbish, retained its folk flavor and its fast moving plot, and refashioned it in accordance with its improvisational character into a riotous comedy, a carnival in the spirit of the Purim Plays, the Jewish analogue of *Commedia dell'Arte*. The stock types of folk-lore, the primitive humor, the popular songs were utilized in the light of the new science of the theatre. In some cases Granovski refined upon his material, in other cases he departed from it completely. The original settings of Rabinovitch, composed of steps, ladders and platforms, permitted a constant movement up and down, a continuous flow in and out, and gave the play an extraordinary dynamic quality and vivacity.

A more satiric play came with *Two Hundred Thousand* by Sholem Aleichem. This play was excellently directed and performed. Subsequently Granovski produced a damning indictment of the old Jewish world in *At Night* "according to Peretz." Granovski had the author's script thoroughly revised so that its soft lyric irony was transformed into annihilating satire. This mystery play with scarcely any plot revealed a poignant picture of a decrepit world—a world of priests, rabbis, traders, and prostitutes—writhing in its last agonies and clinging desperately to its superstitions. Falk utilized in his settings the most awe-inspiring details that the life in this "old market play" held, using the hieratic rigidity of the Church and Synagogue on opposite sides of the stage, and heightening the funereal atmosphere of the

play by ghastly masks and costumes. After *At Night* there came *The Tenth Commandment*, another satiric comedy "according to Goldfaden," followed by *Le Troubadec* in which the Jewish Kamerny Theatre left the national field to enter the international arena of Europe. This "eccentric operetta" (based on Jules Romain's) revolves about Yves Le Trouhadec, his campaign for a place among the "immortals," his association with all manner of criminals, his political career as leader of "honest men," his marriage of convenience, his gambling and debauchery. The plays is, in effect, a withering satire on the moral, cultural and political degeneration of modern Europe. The entire theatrical experience of Granovski went into its production. The next two plays, *Travels of Benjamin the Third* and *Rebellion*, though well done, were neither of them in advance of any previous plays. All of Granovski's productions bear the indelible marks of formal discipline, for in his view esthetic formalism and social orientation are inseparable. The spirit of Revolution resides as much in the manner as in the matter.

TAIROV'S THEATRE

A theatre whose formalism was one of the most clearly defined and self-sufficient was Tairov's *Kamerny Theatre*. Tairov first attracted public attention when the Free Theatre, a gigantic subsidized undertaking that existed before the Revolution, engaged him to produce a pantomime, *The Veil of Pierrette*. When the undertaking collapsed, Tairov continued to work alone. His own Theatre opened in 1914 with *Sakuntala* by Kalidassa. The essential principles which guided the Theatre for about a decade thereafter are stated with great clarity in

Tairov's *Memoirs of a Régisseur*. The Kamerny Theatre came as a reaction against the existing theatres, representing chiefly by two dominant tendencies: the naturalism of Stanislavski and the conventionalism of Meyerhold. For Stanislavski everything on the stage was to be a faithful copy of reality. The actor became a mouth-piece for ideas, an agent for moods. Moods and ideas were furnished by the dramatist. Consequently the naturalist theatre easily fell under the yoke of the dramatist and neglected formal discipline almost completely. For Meyerhold, everything was to be an esthetic convention. The actor became an item, a detail in a plastic pattern. Since the plastic pattern was the invention of the artist, Meyerhold's theatre came to be dependent on the artist. Emotional expression was banished.

Salvation from this impasse was to be found, on one hand, in returning to the theatre the formal discipline neglected by naturalism, and the emotional expression neglected by conventionalism; and on the other hand, by restoring the theatre as a vehicle of the actor's art. Tairov believed that in the theatre, which is primarily an art of scenic action, the actor is the central factor; all other factors, music, decoration, text, etc., are of subordinate importance. It is the director's business to bring cöordination among these elements. The first aim of Tairov's new Theatre therefore, was to train an actor who would be a thorough master of his craft—as thorough a master of his body over its slightest movements as a dancer or an acrobat, as competent a master of his voice in its finest modulations as a singer or an orator. All this was not in order to imitate exact reality in either speech or motion, but to create a new, an original esthetic reality. Such an actor should be able to perform in every

kind of spectacle: melodrama, pantomime, musical comedy or ballet.

To create the proper scenic atmosphere for this actor, to allow his art full swing, stage design must be recreated. The actor's material is his own three dimensional body, and he can best act without contradicting its essential nature in a three dimensional environment. Therefore let the floor of the stage be broken up into various levels and three dimensional settings be arranged along vertical and horizontal lines, so that the hollows and protrusions, the solid parts and the spaces between them offer the greatest opportunity for the actor's movement in every direction and at the same time form a rhythmic design different with each production. The settings, it need hardly be added, should not be borrowed from the world of concrete reality but should rather be the original invention of the artist.

These principles of the "theatricalization of the theatre" were tested, developed and perfected in a series of remarkable performances, such as *Thamira Kitharedes*, *Salomé*, *Phèdre*, *Princess Bambilla* and *Giroflé-Girofla*. These plays, whether dealing with forbidden passion like *Salomé*, *Thamira* and *Phèdre* or with fantastic and eccentric adventures like *Princess Bambilla* and *Giroflé-Girofla* (in the excellent settings of Yakulov, Exter and Vesnin), served Tairov chiefly as esthetic preoccupations. For almost a decade he was concerned with scenic values, with costume, settings, light, dialogue, acting and with emotion in the abstract, neglecting almost completely their relation to contemporary life. Then a change became apparent; an interest in contemporary life made itself manifest; from the abstract language of esthetics Tairov passed to the idiom of the day. He now said: "The Revolution has proclaimed that formalism is

valuable only when it is directed to social ends." Ten years of rich theatrical experience made him fully equipped for his new task.

The first determined attempt in the direction of the new age was made in 1923-24 with Ostrovski's *Storm*. This classic of the last century portrays a sensitive, affectionate young woman Katharine, married to a spineless weakling, Kabanov, who is completely under the sway of his domineering mother. Katharine suffers in an atmosphere of ugliness and misery while longing for beauty and sympathy. Finally abandoned by her husband, she gives her affection to another man, and is driven by the conventions of her period to commit suicide. Without reconstructing the play with historic accuracy Tairov illustrated its central course by a dynamic dialogue, and by the concentrated humanity of the action. The settings, by Stenberg and Medunetzki, were simple wooden structures of rectangles and semi-circles, serviceable to the actors, separately and in groups. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday*, produced the same season, emphasized the hurry and bustle of our present industrial civilization. The following season Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* was played as social satire.

Tairov's productions in 1925-26 consisted of *Kukirol*, *Rosita* and Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*. The last was undoubtedly the most important. Eugene O'Neill's plays abound in passion at white heat and are charged with social protest in the raw, without the guidance of any definite social vision. *The Hairy Ape* is, in fact, full of a dynamite, but in American productions, this dynamite is kept at a safe distance from all inflammable material. Tairov boldly applied the spark to it and made it explode with all its hidden force. Instead of stressing O'Neill's "individual's struggle with himself," Tairov

drew on the deeper implications of the text and created an image unforgettable in its pathos. Against the background of the two layers of society irrevocably divided, one saw the lone individual fighting, in blind rage and tragic impotence, a hopeless fight against the limitations of his own nature and the inexorable power of the established order. The settings for *The Hairy Ape* by V. and G. Stenberg were constructed with the utmost economy. The concentrated light, the simple grouping of the masses, the precise, laconic gestures, and the melodic speech of the actors helped to reveal completely the pent-up emotions of a soul aflame with rebellion.

The next season (1926-27) Tairov produced Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* and Hasenclever's *Antigone*. The more ambitious of the two productions, *Antigone*, was written in 1916 as a protest against the World War. Tairov and the translator Gorodetzki adapted the play, transforming it into a symbol of the international struggle against imperialism and fascism. It need hardly be added that though Tairov may be absorbed in the social or emotional content of the plays, he never loses sight of their value as pure spectacle. In *Antigone* he sought to endow the classic theme with the revolutionary feeling of our day and to create a synthetic and monumental spectacle in which every element of setting, speech, gesture and music was subordinated to the essential rhythm of the play.

Reviewing the work of the Kamerny Theatre for the last few years, one must admit that though it became much less severe, more warmly human, it has not lost anything of its technical excellence. Quite the contrary, it has gained and developed in amplitude, force and significance.

MEYERHOLD

The stormy petrel of the Soviet Theatre is, of course, Vsevolod Meyerhold, who came to the Revolution with twenty years of struggle for theatrical reform behind him. He began his career with Stanislavski in 1898, but while Stanislavski went on doggedly persevering and perfecting the same system of uncompromising naturalism, regardless of war, famine or Revolution, Meyerhold passed many times beyond it, creating in turn the "conventional" theatre, reforming the opera, reviving interest in *Commedia dell' Arte* and in the antique theatre. In addition, he has written much and brilliantly on the theatre. When the October Revolution came, Meyerhold identified himself with it and inaugurated the "theatrical October" in emulation of the "political October." Before 1920 he was drifting between Leningrad and Crimea. He was imprisoned by the Whites, rescued by the Reds, and finally arrived at Moscow in 1920. Since then he has given a series of productions of unparallel variety, novelty and significance which have had a wide influence on every important Russian theatre and on many theatres outside of Russia, reaching as far as America.

His first production after the Bolshevik Revolution was *The Dawn* by Verhaeren. It was Meyerhold's opening gun fired into the traditionalist camp. The play was thoroughly revamped to suit the needs of the moment. The settings were done in a semi-cubist manner. There was an attempt to bring the stage and the audience into close communion. Actual sailors came on the stage mingling with actors, and a military orchestra joined the theatrical orchestra. The climax of the performance was reached when an actual telegram from the



Scene from "The Forest" (*Meyerhold*)



Scene from "Antigone" (*Tairov*)

field of battle was read announcing Smilga's victory over General Wrangel. Meyerhold's next production was *Mysteria-Bouffe* by Maiakovski, subtitled "A Heroic, Epic, Satiric Picture of Our Time." It was shown on May 1, 1921, in a monumental and mass character consistent with the idea of the international labor holiday. Both of these plays were signals to battle by social implication and technical innovation. However, the production that caused a veritable whirlwind of controversy was Crommelynek's *The Magnificent Cuckold*, produced in 1922.

The Magnificent Cuckold was the first production that introduced "Constructivism" in settings and "Bio-mechanics" in acting. Both these movements were outgrowths of immediate needs in the Soviet Union. Many voices were heard against esthetic preoccupation and neutrality in art at a time of such keen social crisis. Moreover, it was clear that nothing could better resolve the crisis, restore destroyed property and rebuild the country than machinery, industry, and healthy human beings. Hence the widespread admiration of machinery and sport. Constructivism was intended to be the theatrical parallel to industrial technique; it demanded the exclusion of all useless decoration and the precise functional organization of the stage. Bio-mechanics was the study of the physiologic and psychologic laws that govern the actor's body as a normally functioning mechanism, so that its every gesture and movement might be utilized with the greatest efficiency on the stage. The actual production of *The Magnificent Cuckold* proceeded about as follows: Curtain, wings, foot-lights, and backdrop were removed. Against the background of the bare wall of the theatre building with its exposed brick work, one could see a simple con-

struction by Popova consisting of wheels, platforms at various levels, stairs and ladders to serve as spring-board for the actors' movements. The stage director and even the stage hands were occasionally in full view of the audience, and the actors wore plain working overalls of blue denim. The actors were without make-up; their speech was a sort of standardized syncopated recitative. The entire action of the play proceeded by acrobatic movements up and down the ladders, through the doors and around the skeleton construction with a zest and rapidity that kept the audience in constant tension.

Meyerhold's next two productions, *The Death of Tarelkin* by Soukhove-Kobylin (1922) and *Earth Rearing* by Martinet-Tretyakov (1923), introduced slight changes in acting and staging, but in general followed in the line set by *The Magnificent Cuckold*. It was with *The Forest* by Ostrovski (1924) that Meyerhold created another sensation. If *The Dawn* and *Mysteria-Bouffe* constituted a period of preparation, of seeking after new forms that would bring the theatre closer to life and united the people in mass action, if *The Magnificent Cuckold*, *The Death of Tarelkin* and *Earth Rearing* represented a period of embattled Constructivism seeking to demonstrate the supreme need of a healthy body and an industrialized state, *The Forest* inaugurated a third period, a period of gradual social reconstruction and theatrical neo-realism—a realism not of simple imitation but one which simplifies, eliminates, organizes and arrives at verity without being a slave to verisimilitude. Since the introduction of the New Economic Policy in 1921, the insurgency of the first years of Soviet life was giving way to a slow process of reconstruction. It made necessary certain concessions to anti-social elements and

created the problem of fighting and controlling them. Meyerhold's work reflected this. *The Forest* was a nineteenth century classic; but as produced by Meyerhold it was a warning against the dangers lurking in the new social order as well as a contemporary interpretation of a classic. *The Forest* was divided into thirty-three episodes. Certain parts were cut out of the original text and other scenes were transposed in order to make the satire of Ostrovski keener than the censor would have permitted in Ostrovski's own time. The element of buffoonery and grotesquery was continued throughout in the delineation of the degenerate nobility, petty merchants and their entourage. Music was closely allied with the action; the accordion was skilfully interpolated, lending a folk character to some episodes in the play. The settings by Fedorov comprised no back drop or painted scenery, but consisted of a simple, winding road rising from the foreground to the back on an incline, to a height exceeding the human figure.

After *The Forest* came a series of productions aiming to show one or another phase of this Aristophanic satire on the bourgeois world. None of these plays had great literary value, yet almost every one of them introduced some new conception of stage technique which deserves the closest study. *Trust D.E.*, produced in 1924, dealt with "the final conflict" between labor and capital. It was thin in plot, but made absorbing by the rapidity of action and the ingenious settings. *Teacher Bubus* by Faiko, produced in 1925, was a comedy exposing the experiences of a muddle-headed intellectual, wrecked because of his inability to decide where his allegiance lay in the struggle between Revolution and counter-Revolution. *The Mandate* by N. Erdman, also produced in 1925, was one of the better original modern Russian dramas,

clever in dialogue and keen in satire. It dealt with internal emigrés who fondly hope for a return to the good old times. *Roar China* by S. Tretiakov, given in 1926, reflected the growing self-consciousness of the Chinese masses and their struggle for emancipation from foreign and native exploiters.

Meyerhold's next production in 1926, *The Inspector General* by Gogol, may be considered as the *magnum opus* of his revolutionary period and certainly one of the outstanding theatrical productions in Russia of the last decade. When Meyerhold's version of *The Inspector General* was first shown, pandemonium broke loose. Conservative critics accused him of profaning a classic and of sacrificing art to propaganda; radical critics condemned him for bothering with a classic at all and for sacrificing the social message to tricks of technique. What Meyerhold wanted was to clarify an entirely new conception of *The Inspector General* on the basis of Gogol's complete literary output; to show the social implications of the play for our own time; and to create a monumental spectacle consistent with the breadth of the undertaking. In *The Inspector General*, Gogol wanted to attack the high and mighty among the czarist bureaucracy, but with an eye on the censor he had to choose a nameless townlet and a picayune hero. Meyerhold now for the first time restored Gogol to his true proportions. Meyerhold made use of all versions of the play and also of incidents and scenes from *Dead Souls*; he invested the main characters with greater importance and placed them in courtly splendor. The fifteen episodes into which the play was divided were mounted on trapezoid platforms, moved in and out by motor power during intermissions. Within these episodes Meyerhold contrived to lay bare the viciousness, the

animal lusts, the fawning sycophancy, the unappeased gluttony of Gogol's grotesque yet true world. Meyerhold used music and pantomime as well as the technique of the cinema in revealing the thoughts of the characters. In the famous last mute scene, Meyerhold introduced a complete group of life-sized and life-like wax dummies with ghastly effect.

The latest classic to be interpreted in a similar manner by Meyerhold was Griboyedov's *The Misfortune of Being Wise*.

Meyerhold's influence has been the most powerful leaven in the transformation of the Russian theatre, on the Right as well as the Left. Perhaps much of the secret of his power lies in his possession of a probing intelligence, which grasps the trend of events in their dynamic continuity and which is dexterously competent to find the appropriate theatrical language to interpret them. Meyerhold created a new Theatre which registered with great sensitiveness the growth of a new world. One must not, however, mistake his productions for arid propaganda. They are highly entertaining spectacles as well, offering greater technical variety than any other European theatre.

Among the theatres under the immediate influence of Meyerhold and for a time under his personal supervision, is the Theatre of the Revolution. Such productions as *The Man and the Masses*, *Lake Lyul*, *The Air Pie* and similar plays relate it definitely to the better theatres of Moscow.

THE LITTLE THEATRE

A Soviet theatre which is especially interesting on account of its evolution is the State Academic Little

Theatre (*Mali Teatr*). Founded one hundred and four years ago, it is the oldest theatre in Russia, and its development mirrored the changes in the life of the country. During the first years of the Revolution, the Little Theatre tried to maintain a position of political "neutrality." As the Revolution swept on to victory, the Theatre began to adapt itself to the new times, and today swims with the current. "The most interesting thing about this Theatre," according to Lunacharski, "is that it compels discussion not only as a definite form of art, not merely as a talented and interesting spectacle, but as a social factor, as a mirror reflecting in its own way the stirring events of our times." Beginning with the classic playwrights, the Little Theatre, which followed the technique of naturalism, has evolved through the plays of Lunacharski and Smolin to contemporary Soviet dramatists like Glebov, Trenev, Belotserkovsky. Its recent repertoire has contained plays like *The Bears' Wedding*, *Ivan Kozir*, *The Granary*, *Go Left*, *Velvet and Rags*, *Arakcheyev*, *Notre Dame de Paris*, *The Wayside Inn*, *Liubov Yarovaya*, and *1917*. With each new production, the Little Theatre approached nearer to contemporary life, with its class struggle and political turmoil.

Two of the Little Theatre's productions deserve special consideration because of their portrayal of new Soviet types, and because of their immense popularity with Moscow playgoers. One of these, Trenev's *Liubov Yarovaya*, gives a vivid picture of the civil wars. It is set in a Ukrainian city where revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces are struggling for control, with unorganized followers of both sides caught in the whirl of events. Liubov Yarovaya is a school teacher who belongs to no political party. She mourns the loss

of her husband, who, she believes, was killed in the World War. This arouses in her a profound hatred of the social system which produces wars; and from a quiet school teacher she becomes a staunch follower of the Revolution, throwing in her lot with the Red soldiers fighting against the White Guards. Suddenly, to her horror, she learns that her husband is not dead, but is an active fighter in the ranks of the counter-Revolution. The two meet, and Liubov Yarovaya feels the tremendous spiritual gulf between herself and her husband. Following an acute inner conflict, she breaks with her husband and joins the Red forces. This personal story is developed against a vast background of revolutionary events which overshadow the personal element and which transpires on the stage with such power and beauty that the play had a long run in Moscow.

Another popular play produced by the Little Theatre was *1917* by Sukhanov. Among the leading characters in this production were Czar Nicholas II and his ministers, members of the Kerensky government, members of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, workers, soldiers, sailors, Red Guards, and citizens. The action takes place in Petrograd and on the battle fronts and is a panorama of revolutionary events.

While the serious Soviet theatres translate into dramatic art the events and implications of the Revolution, there are a number of theatres specializing in satire on various aspects of Soviet life. The Blue Blouse groups frequently perform sketches poking fun at bureaucrats, red tape, vile housing conditions, inefficiency, and the humorous aspects of new social relations still in the early stages of evolution. Similar incidents have fur-

nished the Satire Theatre of Moscow with themes for comedies which satirize with complete freedom existing evils and blunders.

THE PROLET CULT MOVEMENT

Since the entire Soviet system aims at the welfare of the masses, and its cultural slogan is "art for the people," the rôle of the Workers' Club Theatres is of special importance. It is significant that even in czarist times, the workers' revolutionary movement had developed its own theatres. In 1905 there were throughout Russia more than 5,000 workers' theatres in clubs, barns, meeting rooms and cellars, expressing in dramatic form the experiences and aspirations of the proletariat. Following the defeat of the 1905 Revolution, the Czarist government suppressed these theatres; but they were revived under the Soviet régime, and encouraged in every way as an important creative activity of the new working-class life. Today there are more than 15,000 Workers' Clubs in the Soviet Union, nearly all of which have dramatic circles, orchestras, choruses and other art groups. In these clubs more than 285,000 men, women and youths spend their leisure hours, after the day's work and political duties are over, in theatrical and musical activities. During the ten years between 1917 and 1927, more than 7,000,000 workers in these clubs saw over 33,000 theatrical performances. As a result, theatrical art in Soviet Russia is not the preoccupation of a small leisure class, but a truly popular art in which great masses of people participate. This circumstance has affected the entire Soviet theatre, from the trade union amateur groups to Stanislavski's venerable Art Theatre; but it has had especial effect on two theatres which spring directly from the

proletariat and deliberately aim to mirror its moods and express its ideas.

One of these is the Proletcult Theatre, which grew out of the Proletcult movement, founded in 1918 to foster proletarian art. V. F. Pletnev, a gifted workman and author and one of the theoreticians of the Proletcult movement, organized the Proletcult Theatre, bringing into it chiefly workers, but also calling in the aid of intellectuals from the Left Wing theatres, such as Meyerhold, to advise the new players in matters of technique. This Theatre made considerable progress both in the theoretical and the creative fields. The Proletcult bulletins contained articles on proletarian art by P. Kerzhentsev, the talented Communist journalist, diplomat and theatrical theoretician, who advocated more expression for the workers in the theatre, emphasizing especially the mass theatre. The bulletins also published articles by Lunacharski on proletarian esthetics and by V. Smyschlaiev on the training of worker-actors. All the theoreticians writing for the Proletcult bulletins emphasized that the Soviet worker is conscious of the new life which the Revolution had brought him; that this new life is producing its own specific culture with its own forms. The Proletcult Theatre developed directors like Sergei Eisenstein, who staged plays before he directed films, and Forreger, and gave ample opportunity for the development of new stage decorations by artists like Marc Chagal, Nathan Altman, Lentulov and Kandinski. In 1920 the Proletcult Theatre was given official recognition and became the First Workers State Proletcult Theatre. Among its outstanding productions were Maiakovski's *Mysteria Bouffe*; Pletnev's *The Avenger*; Jack London's *The Mexican*; and plays dealing with strikes, episodes from the French Commune and events

of the Bolshevik Revolution. The Proletcult Theatre does not confine its work to Moscow, but, in harmony with the trend of the times, takes its plays to the provinces, travelling in the summertime to the Urals, the Don Basin, Turkestan and other parts of the Soviet Union, exhibiting its plays and instructing groups of provincial workers in the art of the theatre. While the Moscow group is playing in the provinces, its Moscow theatre is occupied by provincial Proletcult groups.

THE MGSPS THEATRE

Another theatre developing directly out of the life of the Russian working class is the MGSPS, directed by E. Liubimov-Lanski. This Theatre, whose initials in Russian stand for "Theatre of the Moscow Trade Unions," was organized in 1922 by a group of workers who felt that the trade unions needed their own professional theatre. During the first year of its existence the MGSPS was a travelling troupe, performing at workers' clubs; in 1924 it received its own theatre in Moscow. During the next few years it produced plays like *1881*, a historic revolutionary drama dealing with the assassination of Czar Alexander II; *Degaev*, based on the exposure of a notorious agent provocateur; *Georg Gapon*, portraying the prelude to the 1905 Revolution; *Mob*, dealing with the Paris Commune. In 1925 the MGSPS Theatre produced Belozerkovski's *Storm*, its first play dealing with the Bolshevik Revolution and the civil wars. This was followed by the same author's *Lull*, dealing with the period of the New Economic Policy; and by a comedy, *The World to the Left*, dealing humorously with the victory of duty over personal inclinations. In 1926 MGSPS produced *Cement*, based on Feodor

Gladkov's novel of the same name; and *Konstantine Terekhine* by V. Kirshon and A. Uspenski, dealing with the sex problem among students and young communists. The last play aroused considerable discussion, touching as it did on a vital problem just then engaging public attention. *Konstantine Terekhine* has been produced in an English version by the Theatre Guild Studio in New York under the title *Red Rust*, though this version, by various omissions and insertions, considerably distorted the original play.

For the tenth anniversary of the Revolution, MGSPS produced Furmanov's *Tumult*, dealing with high politics in a realistic manner. In 1927 the Theatre produced *The Wheels Are Roaring*, dealing with the industrialization of the rural sections of the Soviet Union.

According to the director of the MGSPS, the Theatre feels directly responsible to the workers. While avoiding primitive propaganda and agitation, and stressing the creative aspects of the theatre, the MGSPS seeks to encourage the Russian workers to further victories. "Our theatre," the director has declared, "wishes to be the monumental theatre of these times." In form the MGSPS is realistic. It places great emphasis on the contents of the three plays which it produces every year, and trains its actors in general culture as well as in dramatic technique.

PEASANT THEATRES

While theatres like the Proletcult, the MGSPS and the dramatic circles in the workers clubs are the direct expression of the proletariat, the Soviet government has provided facilities for the peasant also to express himself in the theatre. Due to the comparative lack of rail-

way facilities, the Russian village is remote from the cultural centres. In many parts of the Soviet Union, especially in the north, the village is completely cut off from the rest of the world during autumn and winter. Hence the Soviet organizations whose business it is to deal with peasant culture have laid great stress, among other things, on the village theatre. The province of Moscow may be taken as an example for this type of Soviet theatre. This province alone, with a population of 2,300,000, has more than 5,000 dramatic circles in the villages. The circles charge admission to their performances, and use the money for furthering the general cultural development of their village; they use it to buy newspapers, organize reading rooms, etc. There have been cases where these dramatic circles used the profits of their plays for purchasing agricultural machinery for their village. Most of these circles are, of course, poorly equipped from the theatrical point of view. Most of them have no real stage and the scenery is nearly always home-made; the performances are gotten up without expert advice. In other villages, however, where expert advice is available, the plays are properly rehearsed and produced. The general aim of these village theatrical groups is to educate the village artistically. Considerable work has been done in this direction by the Peasants' Home, located in Moscow, which maintains a model theatre and a staff of trained dramatic instructors. This institution also helps to select plays suitable for the village, and conducts, from time to time, special classes for rural theatrical workers. *The Rural Theatre*, a publication which enjoys great popularity in the provinces, also helps by publishing special articles dealing with the problems of the village theatre, hints on scenery, acting, portraying character, etc. Part of the program to edu-

cate the peasants in art includes The Rural Itinerant Theatre, organized in 1927 by the government of Moscow. Prior to organizing this Itinerant Theatre, its actors had given over fifty performances in forty villages in the various parts of the province of Moscow. The performances of this Theatre are accompanied by lectures analyzing the plays. After the performance the audience discusses the play, the acting, the scenery, etc.

THE MARIONETTE SHOW

One of the best means for educating the peasant in the art of the theatre has been found to be the marionette show. This form of entertainment was introduced in Russia in the seventeenth century, when the Russian people had no idea of theatrical art. The chief character of these marionette plays was Petrushka (Little Peter) corresponding to our Punch. During the first half of the nineteenth century the marionette show was popular throughout the country, but later declined because of its monotony. The Revolution, however, revived this form, using it in villages not only for entertainment but also as a medium of education. Today there is hardly a village festival without its marionette theatre. But Petrushka's themes are new. He now talks about the needs of the village, the coöperatives, the village Soviet; he criticizes village evils, explains the tractor—all in amusing words and comic gestures. The puppet show is also widely used at workers' clubs and children's entertainments.

CHILDREN'S THEATRE

In addition to the marionette show, the children of Moscow have their own special theatre, which, like so

many art forms in the Soviet Union, combines esthetic enjoyment with education. The Moscow Children's Theatre gives the children plays suited to their tastes and needs; but it does more than that: the stage and the actors are part of a large social apparatus engaged in studying child psychology. This Theatre is tremendously popular among Moscow children; at the same time teachers and psychologists as well as parents study the reactions of the children to various plays, observing the effects of the plays in the home life of the children, in their sports, games and other activities. The Theatre is part of the Moscow child's life. It collects drawings made by the children after seeing a play and the games they play under its influence. The Theatre also collects the children's opinions about various plays. All this is studied, systematized and taken into account for new performances. The child spectators discuss plays and suggest new themes. They contribute their views, very often, to the wall newspaper in the Children's Theatre, just as their fathers contribute their views on economic and political questions to the wall newspaper in the factory.

The Soviet theatre, as a whole, is today deeply rooted in the new life created by the Revolution. It forms part of the integrated cultural life of the country. Thus, side by side with workers' dramatic circles, village groups, the Proletcult Theatre, Meyerhold's experiments, the MGSPS and the Moscow Art Theatre, one finds an institution like the State Institute of the History of Art at Leningrad, with its department of Theatrical Science. This department, headed by Professor Alexander Gvosdov, studies the history, theory and science of the theatre the world over.

The State Institute of the History of Art has five

sections: the Department of the History of Art; the Department of the Science of Music; the Department of the Science of Literature; the Department of Theatrical Science; and, coöperating with all of these, a Sociological Committee. The theatrical department is again subdivided into five sections. One studies the theatre of China, Japan, India and other oriental countries; the second studies the theatre in Germany, France, Great Britain and the rest of Western Europe and the United States; and a third studies the history of the Russian theatre. These three historical departments are supplemented by two departments, one of which studies the theory of the contemporary Russian theatre, and the other the contemporary Russian cinema. The scientific findings of this Institute are at the disposal of the entire Soviet theatre.

PLAYS AND PLAYWRIGHTS

Many of the plays mentioned in this brief survey of the Soviet theatre are classics, written before the Revolution, often by dramatists of other countries, ranging from Sophocles to Jack London. During the first years of the Revolution very few new dramas of any consequence were written in the Soviet Union. The Communists complained about the persistence of the old repertoire, and the theatre could only reply that there was no new repertoire. The majority of the plays produced in the years following the October Revolution were by dramatists like Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, Schiller, Euripides among the world classics; by Gogol, Gorki and Ostrovski among the Russians. Revolutionary directors experimented with staging, scenic effects, acting, and lighting; they even modified classic

texts; but there was as yet no real Soviet drama for them to draw on.

Before long, however, the new life produced new plays; and today the Soviet theatre has a repertoire of more than sixty Russian plays written around revolutionary themes. Soviet dramatists may be divided into two main groups: (1) intellectual dramatists, the majority of whom already had produced plays before the Revolution or had at least received some theatrical or literary training before the Revolution; and (2) proletarian and peasant dramatists who matured before and during the Revolution as men but started writing after the Revolution. The first group consists of writers with a certain skill in the use of dramatic form; the second group is considerably weaker in dramatic skill, but possesses a power which is based on its proletarian temperament and its closeness to the Revolution. Recently a third group of dramatists has developed, consisting of young people educated since the Revolution. This group might be called the young Soviet intelligentsia. In its outlook on life it is closely allied to the group of proletarian and peasant dramatists. In all of these Communists form the majority.

On the basis of origin and education, Lunacharski belongs to the first group, that is, among those intellectuals who received their training prior to the Revolution. Despite his numerous duties as Commissar of Education, which include a general supervision of all the Soviet arts, Lunacharski has managed to write a number of plays, most of which have been produced in the past eleven years. The first group also includes dramatists like Globa, Lipskerov, Faiko, Romashov, Erdman, Urin, and Bromley. In this group also belong playwrights like Mass, who has written a number of

satirical reviews, and Antokolski, author of a number of romantic plays. Among the intellectuals with pre-revolutionary training are also futurist writers like Maiakovski, Tretiakov, whose plays have been produced by Meyerhold, and Kamenski, as well as the poet-playwrights Asenov, Marienhov and Shershenevitch. To these also belong writers whose novels have been dramatized, such as Trenev (*Pugachev* and *Liubov Yarovaya*); Bulgakov (*Days of the Turbins*); I. Babel (*Sunset*); Vsevolod Ivanov (*Armored Train*); Andrei Biely (*Petersburg*); Lydia Seifulina (*Virineya*); and playwrights like Alexei N. Tolstoi (*Wonders in the Cage*); Shegolev (*The Empress' Conspiracy* and *Azev*); Platon (*Arakcheyevism*); Shapovalenka (*Peter's Death*, 1881, and *Georg Gapon*); Shkvarkin (*Degaev's Treachery*); Levidov (*The Conspiracy of Equals*); Rindyi-Alexeyev (*The Iron Wall*); Smolin (*Ivan Kozir* and *Tatiana Rysskik*); Sukhanov and Platon ("1917"); Lerner (*Nicholas I*); Paparogopulo (*The Sweeper*); Sheglov (*The Snowstorm*); Venksteri ("1825"); and Romanov (*Earthquake*). The playwrights of the Children's Theatre also belong to the first group, notably Zayitzki, the author of *Robin Hood*. The plays listed so far have been produced in theatres as far apart as Meyerhold's and Stanislavsky's, the Little Theatre and the MGSPS.

The second group of dramatists, *i.e.*, proletarian and peasant playwrights who began writing after the Revolution, includes Bill-Belotserkovsky (*Storm, Style, Echo*, etc.); Neverov (*Laughter and Sorrow, Zakharov's Death*, etc.); Gladkov (*Cement, The Company*); Pletnev (*Strike, Lena*); Chedievsky (*Alexander I, Golgotha*); Davidov (*Bandits*); and Subbotin, who has written a number of plays for the peasant theatre.

The third group, consisting of Soviet intellectuals trained since the Revolution, includes playwrights like Glebov, Kirchon and Uspensky, Zinaida Chalaya and Afinogenov.

The style of the first group is extremely varied. This group includes romanticists, realists, tragedians, dramatists in the heroic style, symbolists, writers of comedies of manners, eccentric comedies, melodramas, reviews, farces, vaudeville skits, and so on. The proletarian-peasant group, on the other hand, is almost entirely realistic. Though some of them have written on historic subjects (such as Alexander I), the majority have taken their themes from contemporary life. Most of the playwrights of the second group come out of the Trade Union theatres, notably Proletcult and MGSPS.

The development of Soviet drama was determined by the course of the Revolution. The period of 1917-21 was one of turmoil, civil war, famine, and imperialist blockade. Realistic drama was impossible during this period, for events happened so fast that it was impossible to depict them on the stage except as transient episodes devoid of dramatic form. Realistic drama seems to be possible only when social life is more or less regulated. The civil war period therefore compelled the pre-revolutionary intellectuals who supported the Revolution to confine themselves chiefly to historical plays, usually in the romantic-heroic style. The proletarian-peasant playwrights, on the other hand, developed a special type of play called the *agitka*, from the word "agitation." These dramatic *agitkas* (like the cinema *agitkas*) were written deliberately for the purpose of propaganda and agitation. They "dramatized" episodes of the civil war period, and stimulated the revolutionary imagination of the armed workers and peasants. Thou-

sands of these *agitkas* were performed at the battle front, in barracks, in workers' clubs and in the villages. The history of the *agitka*, like the history of the revolutionary poster, constitutes an independent chapter in the history of revolutionary art. Agitational plays are still produced in the Soviet Union, but they are now more developed than they were during the civil war period. However, with the general advance of culture, the demands on the dramatist have become stricter. The Soviet public demands that even agitational plays be worked out in an artistic manner; the revolutionary theatre must have not only revolutionary themes but also genuine form.

It was only after 1921, when the civil wars were over and the Soviet Union was able to turn to economic reconstruction, that the Soviet drama could attempt to treat the contemporary scene realistically. However, so far most of the plays are not so much dramas as chronicles, pictures and scenes, naturalistic plays, photographic descriptions of life with a strong tendency to daily journalism. By and large, the Soviet theatre's themes have been sensitively responsive to political events.

"In our age," the Soviet dramatist, Volkenstein, has observed, "the artist is required to possess great power, great consciousness and perhaps a more disinterested love for his trade. The dramatist ceases to be a philosophic dreamer, a fantastic historian, a romantic teller of tales, even though these tales be in harmony with the age. The dramatist begins to be a direct participant in social construction. He seeks actual themes that have a direct and significant bearing on life."

During the past ten years Soviet playwrights and

theatrical directors have experimented with every form of play and every type of staging, with the result that the Russian theatre is today one of the most advanced in the world.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOVIET CINEMA

By Joseph Freeman

In the summer of 1926, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks returned to the United States from Moscow and gave the American press enthusiastic interviews about the Soviet cinema. They were especially impressed by Pudovkin's *Mother* and Eisenstein's *Potemkin*, declaring the latter to be the finest movie they had ever seen anywhere. This was the first news the general American public had about film development in the Soviet Union. Up to that time, only one or two minor Russian films, like *Polikushka*, had circulated in the United States. However, in the fall of 1926, *Potemkin* was exhibited in New York, and the public had its first real view of Soviet film achievement. The critics were unanimously enthusiastic. They felt that by American standards the picture lacked "entertainment value"; some of them were a little uncomfortable under its propaganda; but all recognized the arrival of a new force in the art of the film.

The film magazine *Motion Pictures Today* quoted Douglas Fairbanks as saying, "The Russians have a more advanced understanding of the science of motion and movement than any other picture makers in the world. I had the privilege of going to school—picture-wise—in Russia." The same magazine carried an article by one of its editors saying: "*Potemkin* is an astonishing photo-

play record of a historical event and it would be received by the American people as an interesting story. . . . The great merit of the picture lies in the understanding by its director of movement. There is more movement in this picture than in any motion picture we ever saw. There are scenes of great beauty. There is a fidelity to detail. There is a dramatic rather than a theatrical handling of the big situation." Even trade journals sceptical of the "entertainment value" of *Potemkin* admired its achievement as cinema art. The *Exhibitors' Daily Review*, commenting on the picture's technical exposition, said "its maintenance of pace is masterful; its panoramic pandemonium is dramatic."

The daily press echoed these expressions of enthusiasm. "The best piece of movie filmed to date," declared the *New York Sun* of August 19, 1926, "is in *Potemkin*, the Russian film. . . . It hasn't one solitary saccharine hero or heroine. . . . It is shot so excitingly and with such visual imagination that you are yelling at every turn of the screw and every rattle of the chains . . . *that is cinema!*" The *New York Telegram* said *Potemkin* "is so great a piece of work that its effect must be felt by the motion picture makers."

In 1928, New York had an opportunity to see Vsevolod Pudovkin's film *The End of St. Petersburg*. Once more the critics burst into superlatives. The *Times* said "one feels sometimes as if this film were a remarkable news reel of the Russian revolution." Pudovkin's film, like Eisenstein's two years before, was declared to be the best picture of the season. "Of all the motion pictures playing in New York," the *World* critic said, "*The End of St. Petersburg* is easily the most vigorous, heroic, and in many ways the finest. . . . Its characterizations are superb, its movements exquisite,

its cinema work a positive delight. . . . I have not seen war scenes more vividly, more piercingly photographed. . . . An atmosphere of realness, of tragic grandeur such as I have seldom found in any picture." The *Sun* characterized the film as a "tribute to the genius of its makers." As in the case of *Potemkin*, the critics emphasized not only the artistic merits of Pudovkin's picture, but also its propaganda aspects. One critic (*Evening Telegram*) attempted to analyze some of the causes which contributed to the power of Soviet films: "These great, blistering, blazing movies are made by Sovkino, which is a nice way of saying the Soviet government itself. They are a national concern, and when one of these young, vigorous directors wants the Red Army, the Red Army picks up its rifles and marches. The directors have *carte blanche* for people, technical equipment, buildings and entire walled towns. This of course accounts for their uncanny reality and completeness."

Since these enthusiastic comments, more than forty Soviet films have been shown in the United States. A reaction followed against what one critic called "the cult of the Russian film." Some people made the discovery that while some Soviet films were very good others were very bad, that is, that the Russian film, like that of every other country, had its failures as well as its successes. No one, of course, knows this better than the Russians themselves. In March, 1928, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union called a conference on the cinema at which delegates from all parts of the country, representing party organizations, youth groups, government departments, trade unions, schools, social organizations and the press, thoroughly threshed out the pluses and minuses of the Soviet film. What is most interesting about this discussion is the auspices under which the con-

ference was held and the point of view from which cinema questions were discussed. Here, as in the party conference on literature, purely technical questions, such as lighting, montage, etc., were left to the technicians and the sociological aspect of the film was given primary consideration. The Soviet film directors are intensely interested in technical questions; in this field they have both learned and contributed much. Here, however, we shall chiefly consider the social aspect of the Soviet cinema, because it is in its purpose and contents that it most differs from the cinema of other countries.

AIMS OF THE SOVIET FILM

Soviet leaders have emphasized that the two important respects in which the Russian film differs from that of other countries are: first, that it is state controlled, and second, that its purpose is not commercial but educational. At the beginning of the Revolution, Lenin urged the possibilities of the film as an educational factor, and insisted that the contents of films must be determined by the propaganda department of the government as well as the commissariats of education of the various Soviet Republics. As in the case of the other arts, the first consideration of the Soviet film is the education of the workers and peasants towards a new society. Lunacharski relates that Lenin told him many times that "among the instruments of art and education, the cinema can and must have the greatest significance. It is a powerful weapon of scientific knowledge and propaganda."

Lenin's words contain the key to the character of the Soviet film. At a time when many intellectuals, hampered by literary traditions, looked on the film as a

vulgar form of amusement, the Soviet leaders saw in it the art of the machine age and, more especially, the art of the masses. "Where the millions are," they said, "there serious politics begins"; and the cinema was an art which could be intelligible to millions of workers and peasants unaffected by poems, novels or theatres. In a country like Russia, with vast distances to be covered, with many levels of culture, some of them quite primitive, an art which could reach everybody was bound to take first place. They also felt that art, especially a mass art like the cinema, was particularly important in a period of transition, when one form of civilization was dying and another being born; and while they attempted to socialize poetry, painting, fiction and the theatre, they saw in the cinema an art which was already social in its nature, which enabled them to reach the widest number of workers and peasants. The movie was to be primarily an instrument for the cultural advance of the people toward Communism.

SERGE EISENSTEIN

The new art of the cinema and the new themes created by the October Revolution required new artists. The Soviet movie director is, with some exceptions, himself a child of the Revolution. In this respect, Serge Eisenstein, director of *Potemkin*, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, and *Old and New*, the Soviet director who until recently was best known outside of Russia, is to some extent typical.

Born in Riga in 1898, Eisenstein began his career as an architect and engineer. As a student in St. Petersburg he became interested in Freud; later he began to study Marx. This was the usual evolution of a young

intellectual in Russia. But in 1917, came the October Revolution. A year later Eisenstein enlisted in the Red Army, doing field fortifications for the Bolshevik forces. In 1920, he acted in some of the theatrical companies playing for the Red Army at the front. In the autumn of the same year, he was demobilized and went to Moscow where he joined, for a time, the Proletcult Theatre, for which he staged his first play based on Jack London's *The Mexican*. The following year he worked with the LEF group, particularly with Meyerhold, but he soon broke with the theatre altogether and devoted himself to the cinema. In 1924, he turned out his first mass movie *The Strike*. It was in this film that Eisenstein first attempted to combine Marxian ideas, Freudian psychology and some conceptions about reflexology he had learned from Professor Pavlov with experiments in screen photography. I have not been able to see *The Strike*, but when I was in Moscow in 1926, Eisenstein described to me part of his method: in order to evoke in the spectator a feeling of horror at the sight of soldiers shooting down strikers, he alternated this scene with inserts of a butcher slaughtering an ox. He did not intend this as mere symbolism. The two scenes were unrelated in time, place or action; they were intended to be related psychologically; Eisenstein's aim was to have the death of the ox stir the spectator to a state of pity and terror which would unconsciously and automatically be transferred to the shooting of the strikers.

In Odessa in 1923-24, Eisenstein and his assistants completed *Potemkin*. This film was intended originally as part of a larger film dealing with the 1905 Revolution; it remained, however, a fragment, complete in itself, dealing with the revolt of the Black Sea fleet. *Potemkin* was an epic whose hero was no individual, but

the mass; whose action moved not in the domain of private life but in history; and whose technique—stark, economical, monumental—was commensurate with its theme. If the average Russian worker or peasant was confused by the intricate debates about proletarian fiction or poetry, or the relative merits of the Fellow Travellers and the Constructivists, here was an art which he could claim as his own; he understood its symbols without difficulty, and its theme was his own story, his first big struggle for emancipation.

"POTEMKIN"

The Black Sea cruiser on which the action of the film opens is a miniature Czarist Russia with its sweating sailors and arrogant officers. The sailors refuse to eat their meat ration because it is rotten with maggots; the lying ship's doctor studies the maggots through the microscope and cynically approves the meat. Still the sailors refuse to eat it. This assertion of their human rights is mutiny. The cruiser's commander orders the more rebellious sailors shot; but when the order to fire is given, the members of the firing squad refuses to shoot their comrades; the sailors' patience has broken under inhuman treatment; they turn on their officers, throwing some of them overboard. In the battle between the aristocrat-officers and the worker-sailors, the leader of the sailors is killed. The sailors, now in complete command of the ship, steam into the harbor of Odessa and take the body of their leader ashore. The city is profoundly stirred. Hatred for the nobility animates not only workers but also middle-class people. Down the broad marble staircase leading toward the harbor come men and women, old and young, workers and intel-

lectuals, bringing food to the sailors whose revolt expresses their own aspirations. Suddenly from behind the smiling crowd, the Cossacks come, tall, in straight rows, with bayonets fixed and rifles levelled. The steady implacable march of the boots and rifles down the broad staircase, more than anything else in the film, perhaps, reveals the inhuman power of Czarism. The Cossacks fire, almost without moving, into the crowd, indiscriminately; an elderly lady who has just been waving to the heroic sailors looks startled; her eyeglasses crack; blood crawls down her cheek; she collapses; others rush headlong down the staircase, terrified; a wounded mother releases her grasp on a baby carriage which helplessly bounces down the long flight of steps. Still the boots and bayonets come marching implacably. The rebel cruiser steams out toward the Black Sea fleet, prepares for surrender and death, the other ships of the fleet hoist the red flag: the whole fleet joins the revolt.

Into this bare story Eisenstein crowded scenes and faces which conveyed the sweep of the 1905 epic, giving to millions of Russian workers and peasants, and to such foreign countries where the censorship was not too stupid, a glimpse into a mighty historical movement and into an art which had gained stature and power by moving beyond the boudoir and the cabaret.

The next film which Eisenstein completed was *Ten Days that Shook the World*, done in 1927, for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. Set on a wider stage this film told the story of the Revolution which succeeded where the revolution in *Potemkin* failed. Here, again, there is no individual hero, not even Lenin—the hero is the mass. But in *Ten Days* Eisenstein wanted to go further; he tried to combine all the various forms of cinematography which

have so far been developed—the emotional picture, the historic chronicle, and the absolute film.

Potemkin and *Ten Days* were both shown in the United States and started what some American critic has ironically called the "cult of the Russian film." It is true, perhaps, that the Russian film has suffered as much from some of its friends as from its enemies. Certainly the Soviet movie director has no blind worship for his creations, or thinks he has said the last word in this new art. Since this volume has been based on the policy of letting the Russians, wherever possible, speak for themselves, explaining their aims and purposes directly instead of having them filtered through interpreters second, third and even fourth hand, Serge Eisenstein was asked to contribute to this book his views on the Soviet film. Though his remarks repeat to some extent what has already been said, they are published here as a reflection of the Soviet attitude toward the film.

EISENSTEIN ON THE SOVIET FILM

"Imagine a cinema which is not dominated by the dollar; a cinema industry where one man's pocket is not filled at other people's expense; which is not for the pockets of two or three people, but for the heads and hearts of one hundred and fifty million people. Every motion picture affects heads and hearts, but as a rule motion pictures are not produced especially for heads and hearts. Generally motion pictures are turned out for the benefit of two or three pockets; only incidentally do they affect the heads and hearts of millions.

"This is the state of affairs throughout the world. Suddenly a new system arises. A cinema is created, based not on private profit but on popular needs. Such

a cinema may be hard to imagine; it may even be considered impossible; but one has merely to study the Soviet cinema, and one will see that it is not only possible, but has already been achieved.

"To achieve such a cinema, however, certain prerequisites are necessary. Commercial competition must be eliminated. Big pockets must not devour little pockets; big fish must not be swallowed up by still bigger fish. The simplest way to arrive at such a state of affairs would be to destroy the big fish and deprive the bigger fish of their food, and to unite the little fish in innumerable shoals with common interests.

"In 1917, something like that took place in Russia. The fat individual whales were terrified by a vast collective whale composed of little fish. The fat individual whales fled through all the seas and oceans; while the herd, 150 million strong, which for centuries had been oppressed by a small body of masters, suddenly became master of itself; the immense collective master of an immense collective enterprise. Everyone protected and continues to protect his own personal interest; but the amusing part of it all is that these interests need not collide with the interests of one's neighbor, for the simple reason that all these personal interests are directed toward one goal. There is no longer a mutual destruction of energy and power; instead, there is a tremendous accumulation of collective energy for the benefit of all these interests.

"These interests are class interests, the interests of that young proletarian class which took power into its hands in 1917. This class is a single organism based on solidarity, collectivism and collaboration. It realizes that if all are to be fed, there is no worse way of attaining it than by throttling one's fellow worker. Hence,

this class abolished the system of throttling one's neighbor and established a system of healthy collaboration. This class realizes that when the general interests of all are satisfied, the individual interests of each are satisfied. In the place of individual competition there has been substituted planned collective construction. This was the intention of the victorious working class, and its highest expression was achieved in social centralization and monopoly. These form part of the indestructible basis of the first Soviet state; they were attained by concentrating productive forces and implements in one organizing centre. There can be no regularity of supply without system; there can be no system without centralization and monopoly. Rationalization is unthinkable without the participation of the masses in every aspect of work and construction whose goal is the satisfaction of the interests of the working masses.

"EVERY COOK SHOULD GOVERN"

"A Soviet poster, showing the figure of a woman in a red shawl, carries a phrase by the 'Utopian' Lenin. Every cook should be able to govern. This is the teaching of the leader Lenin; and every cook in the Soviet Union realizes that she must know how to govern. What is more, she does govern. As a delegate to the Congress of Soviets, the Women's Congress, the Party Congress, the trade union, she rules, improves and corrects the policies of her government. These corrections are necessary, for where can there be more errors and unexpected situations than in this new and unprecedented social structure? In the workers' and peasants' State, which is one organism, there must be on the part of the people the most vigilant attention, control and concentration

of the State's creative energies. For if there are errors and inaccuracies in one section, if a single part is defective, the whole apparatus suffers. If in one region of the country the grain harvest fails, this calamity does not enrich some speculator in a more fortunate region; the crop failure is rather a tragedy for every worker and every peasant homestead, whose interests all merge in the general interests of the state.

"But the country of the Soviets is not yet a paradise; it is surrounded on every hand by more or less unfriendly neighbors. The fat whales driven away in 1917 anxiously await an opportunity to strike a blow at the new social structure. This state of affairs gives our art, like our politics, a peculiar character. Centralization and monopoly determine the organizational method of the cinema in the Soviet Union, and the dictatorship of the proletariat determines the militant and 'aggressive' character which differentiates our culture generally from other cultures, but more especially our cinema from the cinema of other countries.

"Lenin said: 'The cinema is the most important of all the arts.' We firmly believe this. The innovations of our cinema in form, organization, and technique have been possible only as a result of our social innovations, as a result of our social order and the new modes of thought it has stimulated. In art innovations are not produced at will; they are dictated by new social forms. The apprehension of the social order is the high goal toward which artists proceed slowly and mathematically, attaining it only after great effort. An art corresponding to the social order develops according to the laws of natural selection; an art which is unsuited to the social order in which it seeks to function suffers

greatly; on the other hand, a social system which is unsuited to our highest conception of art should be swept away.

A CENTRALIZED CINEMA

"Nowhere except in the Soviet Union does the cinema benefit by a unification of three forms of centralization. These are, the centralization of economic production, the centralization of ideology, and the centralization of method. As in other countries, the Soviet cinema is one of our leading industries, and organizationally it is conducted like other branches of our socialized industry. Both the production and the sale of Soviet motion pictures have been centralized. At present, for example, Sovkino controls all foreign sales through its representatives in those countries which have trade relations with the Soviet Union, as well as all business connected with the purchase of motion picture equipment and machinery. It also controls the entire purchase and sale of foreign films in the Soviet Union. It controls 60 percent of the domestic market in the Soviet Union, monopolizing the entire production and sale of Soviet films with the exception of the autonomous republics, such as the Ukrainian and Georgian films. Sovkino also controls a large number of motion picture theatres throughout the Soviet Union and handles 25 percent of the sales to those theatres which it does not control. The cinema organizations of the autonomous republics, while acting independently and exercising a monopoly within their own national boundaries, have close business relations with Sovkino. It is to be hoped that in the future there will be a still further concentration of the cinema industry, which will unify the various cinema organizations into one state monopoly. Such a unifica-

tion will make the cinema one of the strongest of Soviet industries, and will eventually lead to a change in economic control. At present the cinema is under the control of educational and political institutions; when completely unified its economic administration should logically be handed over to the Supreme Economic Council.

"Centralization of production is the first stage toward a highly unified cinema. At present we are also developing the second stage: the centralization of ideology. We are convinced that the cinema is intended not for mere entertainment, but for general cultural and social aims. These aims should be pursued without any element of private interest or private gain. The cinema is partly an industrial undertaking, and partly an art. The commercial and economic aspects of this art must be completely subordinated to the social and cultural tasks set by the Revolution of 1917. The plan for completely unifying the industrial side of the Soviet cinema makes it possible to establish not only the economic but primarily the ideological dictatorship of those organs established by the workers for the protection and propagation of those ideas for which they fought.

ART AS A WEAPON

"The Soviet cinema aims primarily to educate the masses. It seeks to give them a general education and a political education; it conducts an extensive campaign of propaganda for the Soviet State and its ideology among the people. These aims are pursued by all the arts in the Soviet Union, guided by the agitational-propaganda section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The Soviet cinema, specifically,

works under the direction of the People's Commissariat of Education and the Supreme Council of Political Education. With us 'art' is not a mere word. We look upon it as only one of many instruments used on the battlefronts of the class struggle and the struggle for socialist construction. Art is in the same class as the metalurgical industry, for example.

"In the Soviet Union art is responsive to social aims and demands. One day, for example, all attention is centered on the village; it is imperative to raise the village from the slough of ancient custom and bring it into line with the Soviet system as a whole; the peasant must learn to see the difference between private ownership and individualistic survivals on the one hand, and cooperation and collective economy on the other.

"S O S!

"The seismograph of the Party apparatus notes a vacillation in this section of Soviet life. At once, all social thought is directed toward it. Throughout the country the press, literature, the fine arts are mobilized to ward off danger. The slogan is: 'Face the Village!' The smitchka, the union of proletarian and poor peasant is established. Opponents of Soviet aims are ousted. The strongest propaganda guns are put in action; there begins a bombardment on behalf of socialist economy. Here the cinema plays a big rôle.

"Again, attention may be concentrated in another direction. There has been a break with a foreign country. War seems imminent. Defend the Soviet Union! Every form of art coöperates with the country in clarifying the situation. What shall we defend? Our achievements, our all—not the private wealth of a few individuals or financial concessions in the colonies or recently seized markets.

"The Soviet cinema and theatre can hardly keep pace with the new social orders issued every day by the people carrying out tremendous social tasks. There is no time to reflect, to present the situation 'objectively' through art. It is a neck to neck race between the cinema and the newspaper. For instance, the campaign for grain sowing begins. Motion pictures dealing with the most suitable kinds of grain must be rushed to various parts of the country. Motion pictures impressing the necessity for sowing selected seeds must be exhibited in the villages again and again. The peasant must be shown that crops can not improve as a result of religious processions and prayers for rain.

"The twentieth anniversary of the 1905 revolution arrives. The Soviet cinema must reproduce that stirring year. The workers must know the history of their past, when the proletariat of St. Petersburg and Odessa sacrificed their lives for freedom. Or the tenth anniversary of the 1917 revolution comes. The great fighters who participated in the 'ten days that shook the world' are passing away; the towns which were the centres of the Revolution of November 7 are changing. The events of those days must be accurately recorded by the cinema while there are still living eye-witnesses. Posterity must have a photographic reproduction of the great Revolution, a living textbook for the inspiration of other generations.

"As for history 'in general,' that is a sweet idealization of bourgeois historians. The 'great' and 'illustrious' personages of the past ruled the fate of millions according to their limited views. They were 'gods' invented out of whole cloth. It is time to reveal the bunk about these paid romantic heroes. The concealed traps of official history must be exposed. We want to know how

the social basis of these fabulous figures, glorified by hired scholars in the interests of their class and their descendants. Ivan the Terrible as a personality in the manner of Edgar Allan Poe will hardly interest the young Soviet worker; but as the creator of the linen trade, the Czar who enriched and strengthened Russia's economic position, he becomes a more interesting figure. The story of Ivan the Terrible should go on to tell how he became absolute monarch, head of a dominant aristocratic class; it should tell of the struggle among the higher classes of society, how they became weakened. On this basis the story would be nearer reality and of more importance than a fantasy about a mephistophelian figure, a Czar who was a wild beast. The merchant-Czar, what could be more concrete! Recall our recent 'first landlord,' Nicholas II. In a motion picture lasting an hour and a half all the years of tinsel, falsehood and deception are dispersed.

SOVIET MOVIE THEMES

"The Soviet cinema, then, is a cultural instrument serving the cultural aims of the Soviet state. In our country the leaders of the cinema do not sit around discussing whether or not the public wants sea films; or that movie fans are crazy about costume films dealing with the eighteenth century; or that it is too soon to change the program to a new wild west film; or that it has been a long time since there have been South Sea island films and they would now be a great novelty; or that the 'Big Parade' continues to hold the interest of the public and there must therefore be an increased production of war movies. In the Soviet Union a discussion of proposed films is not carried on with both eyes on the

box office. If it is planned to produce a photoplay dealing with the life of the Soviet youth, the cinema directors talk the matter over with the Young Communist League, which is the leader of the Soviet youth. The object of the film is to clarify various problems in such a way that it will arouse discussion and thought among the young people of the Soviet Union. Love films are not produced for the mere purpose of exciting the audience, but to throw some light on sexual relations, on the new moral code which has taken the place of the old.

"The cinema handles other living problems in the same way. There are themes on every hand. The government is carrying on a campaign for the reduction of prices by lowering the cost of production through efficient methods. We call this 'rationalization'; but we do not wish to impose rationalization by force. It must come through understanding. The situation must be made clear; the masses must be made enthusiastic about it. A fascinating theme for a movie. Again: the local and central economic institutions are too rigid. Bureaucracy interferes with socialist construction. This weakness must be attacked either satirically or tragically or both. The cinema must show how the tragedy of the small man is caused by the inflexibility of the credit apparatus. The cinema finds another theme in nepotism. Some responsible workers have an overdeveloped family feeling; they introduce relatives and friends into the institutions where they work. Such preferences are forbidden by Soviet law. The wife may live with her husband, but she cannot serve under him in public office. Regulations for obtaining positions are established by the trade unions and labor exchanges; and the cinema assists in impressing the evils of nepotism on



Scene from "Ten Days that Shook the World" (*Eisenstein*)



Scene from "Storm Over Asia" (*Pudovkin*)

millions of spectators. In this way the Soviet film is an integral part of the entire cultural apparatus of the country, which is directed toward a better life for all.

"Occasionally, someone makes the mistake of trying to improve the commercial aspects of a film to the detriment of its educational aspects. Organized Soviet society meets such attempts with the most merciless criticism and the fiercest attacks. Dispute follows dispute. Conferences are held. The matter is discussed at provincial and national congresses, and finally the Communist Party institutes an official discussion on the cinema which results in definitely laying down a correct policy. We realize that every ideological or tactical institution is primarily based on organized society, and, as in the nervous system, every part effects the whole.

"The internal organization of our cinema industry is like that of other Soviet industries. All workers connected with the cinema industry, in whatever capacity, belong to a trade union, to the Photo-Cinema Section of the Union of Art Workers. Every cinema unit, like every Soviet factory, has its factory committee, elected by the workers of the unit. The factory committee is the vigilant defender of the workers' rights, especially of those rights which they secured through the October revolution. The factory committee is the centre of social life in the factory. One of its jobs is to conduct regular discussions on film production. These discussions are attended by every kind of worker in the industry, and everything is considered which in any way pertains to the enterprise. Nobody is omitted, from the director to the janitor, from the costume-maker to the 'star.' Before such meetings of all the workers in his unit, the director reports on the plan of work for the coming year. At the end of a year, the workers

make a strict examination of his report and of the actual work accomplished. The manager of the laboratory reports on possible innovations. The director of the cinema is called to order for exceeding the financial estimates of a film or for the misdeeds of its hero. All the workers participate on the appraisal of a new film, each on the basis of his specialty.

CARL LAEMMLE AND THE CARPENTER

"I should like to see how Von Stroheim would reply to the attacks of the youngest critics on excessive expenditures for the *Wedding March*; or Griffith listening to the tailors pointing out that the *Birth of a Nation* does not sufficiently establish the economic basis of the Civil War; or Carl Laemmle explaining his balance sheet to carpenters, painters. In our country that is what every movie director must do; and under our conditions I cannot imagine a healthier or more useful system. These tailors, assistants, carpenters and painters represent those countless tailors, assistants, carpenters and painters in whose interests, and in whose interests alone, the film is made and released. Every penny superfluously spent is the workers' penny; it is a loss which his enterprise and his factory sustains. In addition to serious criticism from the members of the factory committee, the movie director has to submit to criticism in caricature and satire in the factory's wall newspaper. Such wall newspapers are found in every factory and office throughout the Soviet Union. They are published by the factory committee and express the immediate views of the workers in the enterprise.

"On a small scale, the factory committee reflects the structure of the cinema industry as a whole, from the

chief regulating committee and the estimating department of the Commissariat of Education, which controls the ideological and economic plans of the cinema industry as a whole, to the Workers and Peasants Inspection, that strict ultimate censor which controls the ideological and economic aspects of all Soviet enterprises. One solution we have arrived at already: the Soviet film serves the mass of people, their interests, their organizations; it is the expression of the collective strivings of various organized units. Specialists, directors, cameramen and scenario writers realize that they are the voice of this collective mass demand. Hence the Soviet film has real life; hence it expresses the true spirit of the people and the essence of the epoch. Soviet films are based on Soviet life; whether they deal with the new moral code, the workers' family or films celebrating historical events and requiring the collaboration of thousands of people, they are true to life. They must be true to life. This was impressed on me in the making of my own films, beginning with *Strike* and ranging through *Cavalry*, *Potemkin*, *Old and New* and *Ten Days that Shook the World*. The Soviet scenario writer and film producer must draw his material from living sources. If the scenario deals with family problems, they must get in touch with the Women's Section, that department of the Communist Party which specializes in work among women, which knows most about what is being done for mothers and children. If a film is to deal with historical subjects, the director gets in touch with local and central historical associations which specialize in collecting material about the Revolution, with the Association of Old Bolsheviks, with the Association of Ex-Political Prisoners, with the Communist Academy and so on. If the theme deals with village life, the director obtains invaluable

material from the Commissariat of Agriculture, from the trade union of agricultural workers and similar bodies. Through these organizations, and under their leadership, the movie director obtains the coöperation of every organized body which knows anything about the theme of his film. He has at his disposal as advisors and actors those who personally participated in historical events; organizations of specialists; newspapers and magazines specializing in the subject of the film. All these collaborators in the making of the film meet and express opinions; material is collected; the most important fact about the theme of the film are placed at the directors disposal. Throughout the making of the film the director works in the closest coöperation with these organizations. This contact with the life of the Soviet Union is carried even further. The scenario is taken directly to the people. A scenario dealing with the new relations in the workers' family is discussed at factory meetings and out of their own experience the workers make extensive alterations. A scenario dealing with farm problems is submitted to agricultural experts; biologists revise scenarios where cattle-breeding is described.

"This system pervades the whole Soviet cinema. We are opposed to 'constructing' sets. Our system is different from Hollywood's. If we need a factory for a film, we do not have to 'construct' one; we go to an actual factory; we believe that a faked factory can never reproduce the atmosphere of a real one. When I turned out *Ten Days that Shook the World*, I needed the Winter Palace in Leningrad; I preferred to transplant the production of the film to this dead palace, rather than make it in the comfortable atmosphere of a studio. The damp cellars and the rats of the real palace helped us in our work, so that on the screen we were able to reproduce

with complete accuracy the milieu necessary for our film. Furthermore, in making this film three or four thousand organized workers participate in it as actors depicting the mass shooting in the streets of Petrograd in July, 1917. No rehearsals were necessary; the workers know too well just how it was done. Thus the film was the product of an immense collective effort, in which thousands of experts and workers participated, and whose contributions were shaped according to the individuality of the director. This is one of our methods of work; and developing it we are moving to the third and last centralization necessary for the cinema: the centralization of method."

OLD AND NEW

A concrete instance of the ideas contributed here by Eisenstein: in the spring of 1927, I talked with the director of *Potemkin* in Moscow about the film he was then working on, since released under the title *Old and New*. Eisenstein described the origin of that film as follows:

"When I had finished *Potemkin*, the Soviet Union was face to face with two burning questions: events in China and the development of the Soviet village. The Chinese workers and peasants are going through a life and death struggle for freedom. There was a profound need for fighting movies. Perhaps for the first time in history, the film can become as terrible a weapon as a hand-grenade. There on the battlefield where the fight was going on, is the real place of that art which stands in the front ranks of battle—the art of the film. For all art is only a means, an instrument, a method of struggle."

Eisenstein's original plan was to turn out a gigantic Chinese film in three parts. He was unable to carry out this plan for technical reasons. There remained the theme of the Russian village. For more than a month Eisenstein and his assistants studied the problem of the Russian village. They visited model farms, interviewed the editors of peasants' newspapers, the People's Commissariat of Agriculture, the trade union of agricultural workers, the institutes of experimental biology, the agricultural schools, the peasant coöperatives, the poor villages. This was followed by weeks of wading through newspapers, magazines, theses, reports, and government statistics. Eisenstein's purpose was not to produce a film which would give the spectator placid scenes of country life or a romantic idyll of the farm. Instead of merely enchanting the spectator, the proposed film was intended to grip him with the iron hands of reality, to compel him to face one of the most important problems in the life of the country. The film was to make him conscious of the work of the Communist youth in the villages, the activities of various cultural organizations among the peasants, the peasants' correspondents movement, the coöperatives, the new Soviet family life, the movement for the emancipation of women from primitive customs, the struggle against the rich peasants, and the industrialization of the village.

"The movies of Western Europe," Eisenstein said, "carry on propaganda for patriotism and the honest travelling salesman; they erect monuments to the unknown soldier. We must make our vast audiences fall in love with the daily work of the peasant. We must acquaint them with cattle and tractors. The tractor is vital in the building up of the Soviet Union, it is the real hero of my new film."

For a guide to unify the unlimited material afforded by the changing life of the Russian village, Eisenstein went to the theses of the Fourteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which formulated the general line of economic progress. This line was the collectivization of economy and the industrialization of the village. It became the central theme of *Old and New*. He considers it the first film based on peasant material, dealing in a vivid way with problems of great political and social importance.

"The official terminology of theses, resolutions and decisions," Eisenstein said, "come to life on the screen in herds of fat cattle, in the movement of harvesters and tractors in warm stalls, in the opening of the earth under the spring snow." A little later he added: "Does America know about the extraordinary struggle on our 'peace front'? About the heroism of the first attacks of the pioneers of the agricultural revolution? Many Russian cinema theatres are now showing Buster Keaton's comedy *Three Epochs*. My new film, *Old and New*, illustrates Lenin's analysis of the 'five epochs.' It shows the five stages of economy which exist side by side today in the Soviet Union. We have still primitive economy, handicraft economy, and private Capitalism side by side with state Capitalism and Socialism. The stone age lives side by side with the latest achievements of science and social organization, and, what is most remarkable, we are building in all five epochs at once."

VSEVOLOD PUDOVKIN

Not all Soviet movie directors, however, produce impersonal epics, even when they deal with the same material as went into the making of *Potemkin* or *Ten*

Days. Vsevolod Pudovkin, depicting the October Revolution in the *End of St. Petersburg*, attempted to show not only how the war and the revolution affected various social classes, but with considerable pathos, how they affected a peasant, who through the storm of this period develops from an ignorant lout into an intelligent revolutionary worker. Here, too, however, the "hero" is not an individual, but a type, and though he has a definite personal character, he transcends that until he becomes not merely *a* peasant but *the* peasant. Pudovkin's film, like Eisenstein's, differs from West European and American war films because there is an ending to which the Soviet movie director can work—a non-existent factor in the West. The western movie (or novel) can describe the horror of war, the heroism and demoralization of individuals; usually the story is told from the psychological angle—as a rule, from the viewpoint of a bitter and disillusioned intellectual; the story can end either in the death or the homecoming of the hero; to the profound problems which war raises there is no answer; the pious reviewer of the novel or movie can only hope (in the press, far away from the work of art he is reviewing) that the novel or movie will contribute something toward the "movement for the abolition of war." In the Soviet Union the movie director need not rely on such pious hopes in the press; he need invent nothing; for the war was followed by the collapse of a social order, by a realization on the part of the masses of what the real origin and nature of war is, and by the gigantic struggle for a society in which war will be impossible. An Eisenstein or Pudovkin can create a film in which the hero is every soldier, regardless of his "fatherland," every worker, every peasant.

Furthermore, the social revolution has made it possible

for an Eisenstein or Pudovkin to treat the struggles of nations and classes realistically. When the peasant boy in Pudovkin's *End of St. Petersburg* leaves the farm to seek work in the capital, it is not for adventure's sake, but because there is not enough food on the farm. When the workers at the Lebedev munition plant strike, it is not because they are "bad people," or "foreigners," or victims of "outside agitators," but because they are overworked and underpaid. The mass is not romanticized, either, for here we see the strike leader's wife dreading a strike—because her children are hungry; and the peasant betraying his friend, the strike leader—because he is ignorant. But the peasant learns; the city and the factory transform him into a proletarian with a proletarian's mind; he rebels; he invades Lebedev's office and smashes the furniture and shakes the munitions manufacturer like a puppy. The World War breaks out. We see it first as the propaganda-drugged civilian sees it: the horror ahead is hidden by flowers, the boom of the distant guns is drowned by the blare of brass bands. The war goes on. Bodies disappear in the mud; shells burst and men drown in flooded trenches. It is impossible to tell whether they are German or Russian, for from the Soviet viewpoint it makes no difference—they are all workers dying in a war for the interest of their masters. And here, too, Pudovkin can tell the truth: scenes of battle-horror alternate with scenes on the stock exchange where Lebedev is making money on the rise of munition stocks. The rapid alternation of scenes at the front and at the stock exchange, workers in uniform being blown to pieces and gentlemen in derby hats bidding on munition shares, is perhaps the finest war record in the history of the film. But Pudovkin goes further: the war affects not a few "heroes"—not a sergeant, corporal and lieu-

tenant making wise cracks, drinking in Paris cafés and making love to pretty girls—but the entire mass of people. Food grows scarcer; there is no bread; children are hungry; the strike leader's wife is organizing the working women and the men in the trenches wonder "what are we fighting for"? (Could this question, which must have agitated millions of soldiers on both sides of the war, be flashed on the screen in a West European or American film?). The Russian people rebel—the first Revolution of February, 1917. Kerensky appears with a flower in his hand. (In this flash Pudovkin epitomizes a man and a historic period, a leader whose brief unstable power was decorated with flowered speech.) But the war continues. Men are still caught in barbed wire; shells continue to burst; hunger increases; the workers are restless, and to the Kerensky régime, as to that of the Czar, the strike leader is a dangerous person. Troops come to arrest him but he escapes to the front where he speaks words of truth to the soldiers. Kerensky arrives in an automobile; he orders the strike leader shot (here Pudovkin summarizes the actual relations between the Kerensky régime and the working class); but the peasant boy, now a leader among the soldiers, halts his comrades and urges them to go on to Petrograd and help the revolting workers (and here Pudovkin in a brief scene summarizes a historic process in which a revolution was made by an alliance of war-weary workers and peasants). The attack on the Winter Palace begins and the film ends with the fall of the city into the hands of Bolsheviks.

ALEXANDER ROOM

The new era affected every aspect of life, and Soviet films are by no means confined to historic chronicles.

Bed and Sofa, a film by Alexander Room, is sociological, like the others, but it deals with the private life of individuals in the transition period through which the Soviet Union is passing, and stresses states of mind as well as the objective world which evokes them. Room, like Eisenstein, is a Freudian and a Marxist. *Bed and Sofa* might have been sub-titled *Love, Marriage and the Housing Shortage in Moscow*. The film opens with a crowded room in the morning.¹ Husband and wife are in bed together. A cat wakes them. The husband snatches it up and plays with it. It is obvious that despite his youth he is a settled married man who sees more life in the cat than in his wife, whom he takes for granted like the furniture or the room. It is obvious, too, that the wife realizes she has ceased to be a human being to her husband; she is bored with her household duties, with the tiny, overcrowded room in which they live. The husband is unaware of this; he rushes off to work. He meets an old acquaintance of his, a printer from the provinces who has just arrived in Moscow and is looking for a room. It is hard to get a room (the population of Moscow has doubled since the Revolution while houses are built slowly). "We have no room, but we have a sofa": the husband invites his friend to a room which was already too small for himself, his bored wife and their cat. The wife is shocked and angry; she will now have to cook and clean for another man; besides, by inviting his friend, the husband showed his lack of regard for their privacy. The printer, realizing the trouble he has brought into the household, tries to make up for it in various ways; he helps in the room; he brings small gifts.

¹ See Bryher: *Film Problems of Soviet Russia*, pp. 71-83.—Pool: Riant Chateaus Territer, Switzerland.

Suddenly the husband is called away; the printer takes in the situation at once and offers to leave, but the husband begs him to stay, which he does—with the inevitable result. The wife and the printer take an airplane ride around Moscow; life is exciting for her once more; she and the printer become lovers. Suddenly the husband returns; absence has made his heart grow fonder and he comes bearing gifts. The lovers are upset; they hardly know how to tell him what has happened; finally he understands of his own accord and goes out into the city to find a place to sleep. But the Moscow housing shortage makes it impossible to find a place to sleep; it begins to rain. The husband goes home for his coat and clothes; the wife is upset; she is torn between her old habits and her new love; she realizes it is raining and in Moscow it is hard to find a place to sleep; she points to the sofa; the husband decides to stay; the three are now imprisoned in the one tiny room. Subtly antagonistic, the two men play chess; the wife, her nerves on edge, watches at the window; the evening is tense; no one dares to be the first to suggest that they go to bed. The husband finally goes out to buy food; when he comes back the two others are in the bed and the sofa is ready for him. He shrugs his shoulders and goes to sleep. Days pass, and the wife becomes ill; she is going to have a child. Who is the father? No one knows. Under certain conditions it is legal to have an abortion in the Soviet Union, and the wife takes out the necessary papers.

It is at this point that the Soviet attitude toward art places its stamp on Room's film. It is possible that a woman in these circumstances would not have wanted to have a child; but Soviet art, as we have seen, must not only portray people's wishes; it must also carry a "social

message," *i.e.*, it must convey the wishes of the collective; the Soviet Union, while legalizing abortion in certain cases, wishes its women citizens to have children; much like other countries everything possible at this stage of development is done to facilitate the having of children, and women are encouraged to do so. Hence Room's film, at this parting of the ways, shows the wife arriving at the hospital; she looks out of the window and sees a child playing with a doll; she rushes out and takes a train to the country; she is going to have the child. Though this ending may come as a disappointment to some spectators, it does convey the Soviet idea that the personal relations of the parents are nothing compared to children and their future.

"THE VILLAGE OF SIN"

A similar *motif* animates *The Village of Sin*, directed by a woman, Olga Ivanovna Preobrazhenskaya. This gifted director, born in 1885, passed through the theatre, working under Stanislavski, Nemirovitch-Danchenko, Meyerhold and Tairov before she went into the cinema; she began to act in the movies in 1913, and started work as a cinema stage manager in 1915. In *The Village of Sin*, a tyrannical peasant, whose son is fighting at the front, seduces his daughter-in-law. The son Ivan is about to return from the front, and Anna, the helpless daughter-in-law, is thrown out of her home with the baby; she does not know where to go. But the war is over and the Revolution is changing Russia; soon a children's home will be built in the village. The peasant's daughter Vassilissa encourages Anna, "take care of yourself and the baby till the children's home is ready—we live in the new Russia." Ivan returns from the

army; he sees the baby and raises a storm; Anna is terrified and runs out to the stream; she drowns herself. The family brings her body back to the house and sits staring at it; but Vassilissa enters and takes the baby; it is the living that are important, not the dead; above all it is the child who must be protected. Vassilissa walks with the baby into the children's home.

Here a problem which in western countries is left to the people involved is affected by a new social order where children are not private property but members of the community which places their interests first. The old tyrannical father is not only a villain to be hated merely because he is personally monstrous, or "understood" because "human nature is broader than any moral code," but primarily an ignorant peasant—a type produced by a patriarchal system which the Soviet authorities are seeking to destroy; the child born out of so primitive a situation is not to be left to chance or some philanthropic institution but is to join the other children on an equal footing under the direction of the community.

Bed and Sofa and *Village of Sin* have been highly praised in western countries where they have been shown;² in the Soviet Union, however, they were severely criticized as not representing the true Soviet viewpoint. It is in these diametrically opposed reactions to the same films that the divergence between Soviet and western culture can be seen most clearly. To the Soviet critics, both films appeared to deal with accidental rather than fundamental aspects of city and country life; and it is the norm rather than the deviation that Soviet art seeks to portray—above all, the positive and creative

² See Bryher, *Film Problems of Soviet Russia*.

forces in the country. Indeed, speakers at the Party conference on the cinema referred to above pointed out that it is in portrayals of everyday life that the Soviet film is weakest.

Since the film is looked on primarily as a political and cultural instrument, the Soviet directors undertook first to record the history of the Revolution for the rising generation. The beginnings of the Russian labor movement were shown in features like *Palace* and *Fortress* and *Stephen Khalturin*; the struggles against Nicholas I in the early part of the nineteenth century were shown in films like *Decembrists* and *The Union of the Great Cause*; classic figures like Czar Ivan the Terrible, Pushkin and the Ukrainian poet Taras Sevchenko were portrayed in historical films bearing their names as titles. The revolutionary movement of the first decades of the twentieth century were dramatized in films like *Potemkin*, *The Ninth of January*, *His Excellency*. Logically this led to the events of the October Revolution, depicted in *Ten Days*, *The End of St. Petersburg*. In addition to history, Soviet directors filmed literary classics by Pushkin, Tolstoi, Gogol, Turgenyev, Gorki and others; and contemporary novels such as *Cement* by Gladkov and the *Roaring of the Rails* by Kirchon. It was only in the past few years, at the close of the civil wars and the beginning of the period of construction, that the Soviet film turned to contemporary life. Yet films of daily life formed a small part of the general output. Thus in 1926, the Moscow and Leningrad studios turned out thirty-two films of which twenty-three dealt with pre-revolutionary times, five with the civil wars, and only four with contemporary life; and some of these were criticized because they were still tainted with a middle class viewpoint.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE SOVIET FILM

The weakness of many films dealing with daily life is partly due to the conditions under which the Soviet cinema developed. The early days of the Revolution absorbed the energies of the Russian people in military and political struggles, and for some time the government was unable to devote much attention to the cinema. Prior to the Revolution the Russian film industry was in private hands. Four companies, with a total capital of twelve million rubles, controlled most of the industry. These were Hanikov and Company, Yermoliev and Company, the Russian Film Company, and Kharitonov and Company. A number of small private concerns were also engaged in the production of films. The Czarist government kept aloof from cinema production until the World War, when it organized the Skobilev Committee which turned out a number of patriotic propaganda films of the most reactionary nature. Ninety percent of the pre-revolutionary private production of films was concentrated in Moscow, with only two studios in Petrograd and scattered studios in Yalta, Odessa and Kiev. By the end of 1917, following bourgeois revolution in February, and Bolshevik revolution in November, more than seventy percent of the films shown in Russia were native products, and only thirty percent imported. The increased production of native films was stimulated by the lifting of the censorship by the February Revolution, while the importation of foreign films was reduced by the war.

In 1918, the Soviet government organized, under the jurisdiction of the Commissariat of Education, a Cinema Committee, which produced the first revolutionary film at Petrograd. This film, called *The Bond*, was produced

amidst the chaos and disorganization of the civil war and with extremely limited technical means; but it managed to convey to Russian audiences the necessity of coöperation between the revolutionary proletariat and the intellectuals.

The first half of 1918 witnessed an acute struggle between the revolutionary workers engaged in the cinema industry and the old private owners, backed by their stars, directors and managers. This struggle between the owners and workers in the cinema was merely one incident in the acute class struggle through which the entire country was passing. As in other industries, the owners of the film industry resisted all suggestions of nationalization, resorting to threats and sabotage. The Union of Cinema Workers replied by organizing a Cinema Commission; while the Moscow Soviet compelled the private owners to submit to an inventory of the industry. This struggle continued for almost a year amidst civil war and the blockade by the imperialist powers which disorganized the industry of the country.

At this time, the struggle against the counter-Revolution was the supreme task of the young workers' and peasants' Republic, and the encouragement of the Red Army was of primary consideration. The Soviet government began to produce special agitation reels, called *agitkas*, for the battle front. Their purpose was not only to inspire the Red soldiers to fight for the Communist cause, but to educate them so that when the civil war was over and they returned to their factories and villages, they would be better able to participate in the building up of a new civilization.

The films turned out during the civil war period played a tremendous rôle in the development of the Soviet film as a whole and laid the basis for a new type

of cinema art. Concentrating of necessity on *agitkas* and news reels, the Soviet Union developed the latter to an extent unprecedented in cinema history. The period of civil war and war communism was rich in material. Cameramen found not only dramatic but significant material on every hand—on the battlefield, in the factory, at the Communist congresses, in the villages. Only now is it possible to estimate the enormous historical, social and artistic importance of the news reels taken at this time, especially during the latter days of the civil war. No country, and no revolution, has so rich a chronicle of important events. In 1927, for the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, these news reels and film chronicles were edited and the new generation of Russians was able to see a photographic account of the last days of Czarism, the February Revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution, the workers and peasants laying the foundations of the world in which they now live.

On August 27, 1919, a government decree signed by Lenin, nationalized the Soviet cinema industry and placed it under the control of the Commissariat of Education. The same year three agitation films were turned out primarily for the Red Army, but also for the workers' clubs. These were: *The Comintern's Struggle for Happiness*; *The Forest Brothers*; and the *Proletarian Island*. At the same time, the workers' cinema committees organized the "automobile film." Motor trucks travelled through the streets of Petrograd and Moscow showing news reels of the latest events; these "automobile films" were also part of street parades, mass spectacles, etc. The automobile film eventually was sent out into the provinces. Among the more important news reels which travelled through the country were those showing the sessions of the second Comintern congress, the Con-

gress of the Peoples of the Orient and later the third Comintern Congress.

During 1917-21, in addition to news reels and film-chronicles, the Soviet cinema turned out about one hundred *agitkas*. Many of these films, though primarily agitational in purpose, showed artistic merit. They dealt with the famine, the war with Poland, the struggle against the counter-revolutionary armies of Petliura, Makhno, Denikine and Wrangel, aspects of the new life of the country, and changes in social standards. Technically these films were rather poor; the Soviet Union, surrounded by the *cordon sanitaire* of the imperialist powers, was cut off from raw film and motion picture machinery; nevertheless these *agitkas* managed to have considerable energy, feeling and simplicity.

One of the best of these films was produced in Petrograd in 1921, under the title *Infinite Pity*. It showed the sufferings of the Russian people during a severe famine aggravated by blockade. Another film of this period, *The Miracle*, was based on the life of Russia under Czar Nicholas I. Both these motion pictures were directed by Glibov-Putilovski, of the Sevsapkino group of Petrograd. The same group also produced two big films, *Father Serafim* and *There is No Happiness on Earth*.

With the introduction of the New Economic Policy in 1921, and the establishment of diplomatic relations with West European countries, the Soviet industry began to import a number of German films as well as much needed technical equipment. The Soviet film industry was able to establish new branches, and to expand its work. An epoch of reconstruction opened, and the Soviet film could turn to new themes. Young directors and cameramen, trained in the taking of news reels and *agitkas*, were equipped with a technique created

out of necessity. The news reels and *agitkas* developed such men as Eisenstein, Kulishev and Vertov and such cameramen as Tisse, who photographed *Potemkin*, *Ten Days*, and *Old and New*. These men, compelled by their isolation from Western Europe for five years to find an original technique, were rooted in the new reality and learned to transmit this reality imaginatively on the screen. They were compelled by circumstance to avoid the trite and to find a film technique that would approach the richness and variety of the new life.

ORGANIZATION OF THE FILM INDUSTRY

In 1923 the Commissariat of Education took steps to reorganize the Soviet film industry, concentrating it under the control of Goskino (the State Cinema). By 1926, a number of units were at work in various parts of the country. Sevsapkino (abbreviation for "North-west Cinema") with studios in Leningrad, produced features and educational films and conducted an Institute of Screen Art, a school of film mechanics, a central film depot, and a laboratory. In addition, it controlled eighteen movie theatres in Leningrad. During 1924, it produced 289 features, thirty educational films, and thirty-five comics. Many of these films dealt with the history of the Revolution. The 1905 revolution furnished the themes of such films as *The Ninth of January*, *Palace and Fortress*, and *Their Destiny*. Other films dealt with the October Revolution, such as *Red Partisans*, which dramatized the struggle against Kolchak in Siberia; and *Behind the White Lines*, based on the war with Denikine in Novorossisk and Rostov-on-the-Don. Sevsapkino's pictures of contemporary events of that period

included *Infinite Pity* (the famine of 1921) and *For the Soviet Power*. This unit also distributed in the Soviet Union a number of American and German films.

Under the decree nationalizing the cinema, Goskino, the central organization, obtained the right to all locations, studios, and theatres throughout the country. It took over a disorganized apparatus, on the ruins of which it built up an efficient one. It proceeded to apply the basic principle that the film must respond to the social needs of the day; it sought original scenarios, and new, well-trained directors, cameramen and actors. It opposed attempts to compete with the films of Western Europe and the United States, urging instead that the Soviet film reflect the life and aspirations of Russia. It urged that the film should show the life of the Soviet workers and peasants, and the customs of the numerous tribes and nationalities within the country. Goskino laid great stress on educational films and news reels, and in the first half of 1924, in addition to twenty-one features, it turned out twelve fortnightly and six monthly news reels, six films showing industrial processes, six dealing with the life of the minor nationalities within the Soviet Union, and thirty educational films ordered by various State enterprises. Goskino's outstanding feature film in 1924 was Eisenstein's *Potemkin*. Earlier in the year it produced *The Strike*, Eisenstein's first film. A satirical film called *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West Among the Bolsheviks* poked fun at the wild stories then current in the Western press about Soviet Russia. In the following year, Goskino's production included *Abrek Zaour*, filmed in the Caucasus and dealing with the struggle of the Georgians against Czarism.

During 1921 and 1922, before Goskino absorbed them, two minor units turned out some interesting films. Kino-

Moscow (Moscow Cinema) which was engaged chiefly in distributing films, produced *Pugachov*, a historical film dealing with the eighteenth century peasant revolt; while Kino-Sever (Northern Cinema) in Leningrad produced two comedies, one of which (*Three Comrades and One Invention*) was shown in the United States. This unit also filmed Constantin Fedin's novel, *Towns and Years*, described in the section on literature.

The Proletcult movement, which was active in literature and the theatre, had its own cinema unit called Proletkino, organized in 1923. Its films were based, to a large extent, on events of the October Revolution, such as the *End of Kolchak* and the *Struggle for the Factory*. Among other things, it filmed Libedinski's novel *A Week* and produced a serial in six parts called *The Spark Becomes a Flame*. Two of its features, *Kerim's Daughter* and the *Mussulman Girl*, were based on the struggle for the emancipation of women in the Soviet East.

At the same time Mejrpom, a workers' relief organization known in English-speaking countries as Workers' International Relief, had its own cinema unit, known formerly as Mejrpomruss and now as Mejrpomfilm. Its films have covered a wide variety of subjects. Under the direction of Protozanov it screened *Aelita*, a novel of revolutionary events by Alexei Tolstoi. Its historical films include *Ivan the Terrible* (shown in the United States) and *Stenka Razin*, based on the seventeenth century peasant rebellion. Its gifted director Jelabouiski produced two comedies, one for children (*The Red Nose*) and one dealing with Moscow Street Life (*The Girl Who sells Mossiprom Cigarettes*). Gardine, another of its directors, produced two films based on the life of aviators (*Four and Five* and *Bird of Steel*). A number of educational films produced by this unit

showed the operations of the textile, coal, metal and other industries. Mejrpomruss absorbed one of the oldest of Soviet units, Russ, which was organized in 1917, and until its absorption in 1920, produced a number of films, many of them based on novels such as Merezhkovsky's *Peter and Alexis*, Tolstoi's *Polikushka* and Pushkin's work.

The so-called minor nationalities had their own cinema units, of which the best, perhaps, is the Ukrainian cinema (WUFKU) organized in 1921. It was this unit which produced *Taras Shevchenko* and *Two Days*. The cinema of the Tartar republic (Tatkino), established by the Commissariat of Education in 1924, specializes in news reels and distributes the films of other Soviet producing units to workers' clubs and village organizations. The Georgian republic had a unit (Gruzkinpom) with a studio in Tiflis. It has turned out some of the most original films in Soviet Russia, due partly to the colorful scenery and rich national traditions of Georgia and partly to the gifts of its manager Bek-Nazarov and its director Perestiani. Similarly, the Soviet republic of Azerbaidjan, with its capital in Baku, has its own unit (Azkino) established in 1922, to counter-act the flood of objectionable films coming in from Turkey. Its films deal largely with local history and contemporary life. Thus *The Virgin's Tower* is based on an old legend about the tower which stands in the main square of Baku, facing the Caspian Sea; *Kerim the Brigand*, on events in the feudal period of Azerbaidjan's history; *The Execution of Twenty-Six Communists*, on the period of British occupation when the British shot the city's leading communists. *Black Blood*, an educational film, shows the workings of the oil industry. Gosvoyenkino, a unit which has since been absorbed, for a time produced

pictures dealing with the Red Army and Navy; it was under the control of the Commissariat of War.

With the economic advance of the Soviet Union, the government reorganized the film industry, centralizing it in an organization known as Sovkino (Soviet Cinema). There are throughout the Soviet Union, at this writing, about fifteen producing companies, the most important of which are Sovkino in Moscow, Mejrpomfilm of Moscow, WUFKU of the Ukraine, Goskinprom of Georgia, Belgoskino of White Russia, Turkmenkino of Turkmenistan, Uzbekgoskino of Uzbekistan, Azgoskino in Azerbaidjan, Armenkino in Armenia, and Chuvashkino in the autonomous Republic of Chuvash.

However, in the cinema, as in other fields, Soviet life changes rapidly. The Five Year Plan adopted by the Soviet authorities calls for further centralization and reorganization of the film industry. The Soviet cinema is only about eight years old. In this brief period it has made striking progress. From twelve feature films, turned out in 1922-23, the production of Soviet films has risen to ninety-eight features and seventy-three educational films in 1928. Prior to the Revolution there were in Russia only 3,500 movie theatres; by 1928, this number had increased to 8,500. It is characteristic of Soviet life that the largest number of movie theatres (thirty-six percent) are located in workers' clubs; twenty-nine percent are travelling outfits, fourteen percent are rural theatres and only twenty-one urban commercial theatres. However, only one percent of all commercial theatres are in private hands; of the remaining ninety-nine percent, forty percent are operated by trade unions, thirty-five percent by the Commissariat of Education, twenty-one percent by other government departments, and three percent by Sovkino itself. The

Five Year Plan now calls for doubling the annual production of films, for a comparatively small increase in commercial theatres and a large increase in cinema theatres located in workers' clubs, villages and schools. It is planned that at the end of five years eighty percent of all the workers' clubs will have cinema theatres of their own. Special emphasis will be placed on educational films, which hitherto have met with severe criticism in the Soviet Union because they stress external processes and do not go far enough in showing the full social implications of the subjects dealt with.

These shortcomings of the educational film have existed despite the emphasis on such films by the Soviet authorities. An intensive campaign is now being carried on to improve the cultural and artistic qualities of such films, and if one may judge by *Turksib* great headway has been made in that direction. Soviet educational films are, in part, produced for specific organizations, such as the Supreme Economic Council, the Central Union of Consumers' Coöperatives, the Council of Trade Unions, and various departments of the central government and the governments of the individual republics. The difficulty with Soviet educational films, as with those in other countries, has been that they were either dull or jazzed up in story form, losing in accuracy what they gained in excitement. Experiments are being carried on to combine accuracy with entertainment. Educational films which have been produced in the past deal with the industrialization of the Soviet Union, the oil industry, the film, radio, aviation, the army and navy, electrification, and construction. Other educational films have dealt with "the lust for drink," "the fight against fatigue," "accident prevention in the mines," "the care of cattle," "love in nature" (reproduction among cattle,

insects and water plants), expeditions to distant parts of the Soviet Union, and filmed marionette shows for children such as *The Overthrow of Czarism* and the *Tenth Anniversary of the October Revolution*.

TRAINING MOVIE WORKERS

Like the Soviet theatres and Soviet literature, the cinema industry has organized the training of directors, actors, cameramen, and electricians on a large scale. In addition to the Institute of Screen Art in Leningrad, mentioned above, there is the Moscow School of Cinematography with more than 400 pupils, who receive not only training in their art but a general education in politics, sociology, literature and so on. One of the points most stressed in the training of Soviet cinema workers is film cutting.

The Russian director, [Mr. Kenneth Macpherson, the British film critic, observed in the *Close Up* of September, 1928] makes a profound and exhaustive study of the new art of cutting which has grown up in Russia alone, and which is unique in the world of the cinema. The basic principle is never to repeat the same shot twice, and never to prolong any scene, whether a street with people, or a closeup, or swift action, one moment longer than is necessary to convey the meaning to the spectator. This meant that instead of about four or five hundred cuts in the film there may be anything from a thousand to four thousand. The brisk, virile and stimulating effect thus achieved goes far in assisting the power of the subjects chosen. As an example I will cite a moment from Eisenstein's *Ten Days*, of a soldier firing a machine gun, the most astonishing effect was achieved by cutting alternately from a closeup of the soldier's head to the spitting gun, with the rapidity of the actual familiar crackle of the machine gun. The impression was so swift as to almost baffle the eye, and lasted about one

second, but the feeling of deadliness and death, and the harsh splutter of the gun were as vivid as if someone had actually turned a Maxim on the auditorium. It is then to the achievement of such effects as this, that the intensive study of film cutting is devoted; not to produce something brilliant and impressionistic, rather to give realism and the reaction of an actual participant. One often reads of the camera being used as an eye. The Russian method uses it not as an eye, but as a *brain*. It darts surely and exactly from one vital thing to another vital thing. Its penetration is acute and deep, and very rarely (in its best films never) led astray by side issues or sentimentality.

A COLLECTIVE ART

The Soviet cinema has developed a number of amateur organizations which coöperate with the cinema workers and the Commissariat of Education in developing the quality of the film. Side by side with the Association of the Revolutionary Cinema (ARK), organized in Moscow in 1924, and consisting of movie directors, managers, actors and technicians, there exists throughout the country branches of the Society of Friends of the Soviet Cinema (ODSK), to which anyone may belong. The ODSK coöperates with the cinema industry in various ways. It criticizes films before they are released; it draws attention to new films; and assists in extending the travelling cinema. In the winter of 1926, for example, I was present at a joint meeting of the ODSK and ARK in Moscow, which discussed a new film called *One Sixth of The Globe*, directed by Vertov. This gifted director is the leader of a tendency in the Soviet cinema, calling itself the "Cinema Eye," which seeks to develop the possibilities of the news reel as an art form. The Soviet film *Shanghai Document*, directed by J. M. Blokh, which was recently shown in New York, is an example of this

school's work. Avoiding invented plots, the Vertov group attempts to convey ideas and action through a dramatic combination of photographs of actual life. *One Sixth of The Globe* was such a dramatic survey of the Soviet Union, showing cotton picking in Turkestan; the life of tribes in the arctic circle; harvesting in the Ukraine; industrial expansion in Kharkov and Leningrad; political events; and, by contrast, swift interpolations of life in Western Europe. These shots of actual life were woven into a stirring development toward a central point: the Soviet Union building Socialism. When this film was shown to the members of the ODSK and ARK, Vertov and his chief cameraman first explained their objective and, after the film was over, listened to criticism. From the floor, cameramen and actors pointed out technical flaws, while workers and active Communists discussed the ideology of the film. One young Communist described the effect of the film on an audience of peasants in a village near Moscow, and transmitted some of the questions they asked. Many of the criticisms and suggestions were adopted by the director and the film was modified accordingly.

FILM METHODS

Vertov, incidentally, has done more, perhaps, than any other director to raise the news reel from mere reporting to an art. Opposed to the theatrical film on principle, Vertov goes about the streets to surprise human beings in characteristic and revealing movements, filming them often when they are not aware of it. To him, films with actors, sets, and plots are not real; he will not even call himself a director; he is merely the "author-superintendent." For, while the director works from an

invented scenario, Vertov detects his "story" in actual life. He is anxious not to disturb people in their unconscious movements; he will resort to all kinds of tricks in order to photograph them without their knowledge, so that he may get actual life as accurately as possible. He is thus the enemy of those films which seek to arouse pre-determined emotions. In *The Man With the Movie Camera*, he seeks to strip the film of all illusion by showing not only actual scenes from life but also showing the cameraman filming them and the continuity editor joining the strips together.

This method is carried even further by Esther Shub, who makes no shots herself, but sees things, points with her fingers, and fits scenes together into a more or less unified whole. Odds and ends of daily life, photographed at her order, are ingeniously put together in films of great historic value.

In sharp contrast to this naturalism is the work of Traubey and Kozintzev, two young directors connected with the FEKS Group ("factory of eccentricism"), whose film *The New Babylon* has been shown in the United States. They claim to base their technique on the grotesque but exact eccentrics of the circus, on the balance of acrobatics. They repudiate all realism; the plot of their films is startlingly at variance with the setting; the characters behave unexpectedly. Beginning with mere eccentricity and oddity, the FEKS groups has brought to the Soviet cinema fresh viewpoint and original conceptions.

The leading Soviet cinema directors, however, are the formalists, headed by Kulishev, whose film *By the Law* was worked out in the spirit of an algebraic formula, seeking to obtain the maximum of effect with the minimum of effort. Among the formalists is also Eisenstein,

who gets his effects by eccentric parody and the "pathos of heroism"; and though he will reproduce historic scenes with accuracy, he will not hesitate to introduce a puppet of Bonaparte as a commentary on Kerensky in order to carry out his chief purpose,—to force his audience to think logically, possibly to be moved to action.

The method of Pudovkin, director of *Mother* and *The End of St. Petersburg*, is a mixture of Eisenstein's tendencies with those of Kulishev, one of the older Soviet directors. He omits the irrelevant and retains only that which he considers absolutely essential for his effects. But he is interested in more than external objects; he seeks to photograph the world as it appears to different characters, and he manages to convey his own attitude to the objects he photographs.

The All-Union Association of Proletarian Writers (VAPP), which fights for its own conception of proletarian art in literature, has in the cinema been critical of the formalists, urging greater concentration on bringing out effectively the rôle and aims of the working class in the evolution of society toward Communism.

The technical achievements of the Soviet cinema are not within the scope of this brief survey. From the cultural viewpoint it may be said that in this art, the most important for mass education, the Soviet Union is working toward a fusion of esthetic and educational qualities which will help to inform the minds and stimulate the imaginations of 150,000,000 people toward a great social goal.

CHAPTER V

SOVIET PAINTING AND ARCHITECTURE

by Louis Lozowick

Lunacharski acted as guide to Russian immigrants through the Louvre and Trotzky wrote on Meunier years before they became respectively Soviet Commissars of Education and of War. Intellectuals in the vanguard of the Russian revolutionary movement were as a rule well-versed in the classics and abreast of contemporary philosophy, art and literature. They always recognized the paramount importance of culture in the social transformation which was their goal.

It was therefore only logical, when the Revolution came, that they should turn their attention, almost from the start, to what is known as the third or cultural front, the other two being political and economic. Even while Russia was going through famine and civil war, artists, scientists, and educators were devising plans for the cultural and artistic reconstruction of the country. The masses shifted to the centre of the stage and demanded a share in the cultural wealth of the nation. The popularization of art history, the democratization of art education, the reform of museum activities were among the first steps in the slow and difficult process of bringing art nearer to the masses, making it an integral part of life. No longer the plaything of some generous Mae-

cenae, art was now to change character and become one of the factors in the regeneration of the people. "We must take the whole culture left by Capitalism and build Socialism out of it," said Lenin; and this, in the main, was the leading policy pursued, assuming different forms in the different branches of culture where it was applied. In painting, however, the situation was somewhat complicated by the fact that the Revolution inherited not alone the painting but the painters as well. And while some of them, accepting the Revolution, attempted to change their manner accordingly, others continued to do exactly what they had done previously without changing even their themes.

PRE-REVOLUTIONARY GROUPS

An examination of the total amount of work accomplished in the last twelve years shows that, aside from the few newer tendencies, every Russian school of painting and sculpture of the past fifty years, with slight exceptions, has been fully represented in Soviet art. In order, therefore, to estimate objectively the extent and quality of this twelve years' achievement and the relative importance of old and new schools, a description of the more important pre-revolutionary schools becomes essential, especially since even the several attempts in a new direction have grown out of them.

The first of these schools, *The Travellers* (*Peredvijniki*) celebrated its fiftieth anniversary a few years ago. It came into being in the early seventies after the emancipation of the serfs, and was called by its founder Kramskoy "A second emancipation of the serfs." There was deep truth in this, for the *Travellers* were an inseparable part of the intellectuals, oppressed by absolutism

and convinced that only a bond between them and the people could lead to their common liberation. The artists who comprised this school grew up on the Populist literature of the Russian writers Belinski, Dobroliubov, Tchernishevski, Pisarev and on the history of the revolutionary movements in Western Europe. They were therefore animated by hatred for absolutism and imbued with the contemporary ideal "to the people." They identified the Academy with the old régime and revolted against both. The ideal of the Academy had been "pure art," by which it meant chiefly its own vapid version of Italy, Rome and Greece. The *Travellers* were utterly contemptuous of "pure art," looked to the Russia of their time, and preached the necessity of art in the service of a liberating ideal. To establish closer contact with the people, the artists initiated the practice of annual travelling exhibitions (hence their name). Artists like Perov and Vereshtchagin were typical of the rest. Perov pictured the gluttonous priests, the self satisfied parvenues, the idlers of the nobility, the corrupt *tchinovniks*, down-trodden suffering peasants—all dark corners of Russian life. Vereshtchagin never tired of pointing out the idiocy of military glory, the false heroism of the battlefield, the ugliness, brutality, inhumanity of war and the terrible suffering of the average soldier. Gué, Surikov and Repin were among the more prominent members of the school. To date, although most of the founders have died, the *Travellers* have continued their yearly exhibitions, constantly recruiting new members. Among the artists of this group who exhibited in the last twelve years, some in one-man shows, others in groups, were Repin, Polenov, Archipov, Yuon, Zhukovski, Vasnetzov, Maliutin, Vinogradov and Radimov.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the

first decade of the twentieth, the group of the *Travellers* was greatly weakened by the rise of *The World of Art* (*Mir Isskustva*), artists grouped around a publication of that name who were in every respect the opposite of the older school. They were outspoken individualists, disillusioned with the people and with social idealism, seeking the glorification of self—a philosophy not unfamiliar among large classes of “tired radicals” in all capitalist countries. They sneered at the sermonizing of the *Travellers*; they held that art is only debased by the preoccupation with moral, social or other problems and that esthetic pleasure is the beginning and end of creative activity. Instead of the *Travellers*’ tragic themes done in grey and sombre colors, the Decadents (as the *World of Art* members were sometimes called) preferred gay and frivolous themes in bright and playful colors, or exotic subjects drawn from mythology, fairy tales and oriental legends, themes from the high life of eighteenth century France and the Russia of Catherine’s day. They liked to picture with a soft irony the perfumed robes and refined manners of the aristocratic idlers as they pass their days gaily in Rococo palaces, in shady bowers, near spouting fountains—the whole artificial environment of a world intoxicated with pleasure and oblivious to the abyss at its feet. The detachment from the life about them may be the reason why the *Decadents* excelled in theatrical decoration, especially in the type in which color is the main element, creating the mood of the play. The leading figures in this group were Vrubel, Benois, Korovin, Golovin, Bakst, Somov, Roerich, Serov and later Sudeikin, Grigoriev and Yakovlev. Many *Travellers* also went over into this camp. During the revolutionary period one meets with still other names at their exhibitions such as Braz, Serebriakova, Dobujin-

ski, Petrov-Vodkin, Kustodiev and Tchechonin. Two books of drawings, Somov's *Le Livre de la Marquise* and Benois' *Versailles* are ideologically and technically among the most perfect examples of the yearning retrospectivism, the aristocratic conceit, the subtle sensuousness of the entire school. Incidentally, both of these arch-bourgeois works appeared during the most critical period of the Revolution, the first in 1918, the last in 1922.

The Jack of Diamonds (*Bubnovy Valet*) group of painters was organized in 1909-10. Its leading members formed what is perhaps the most consistent and devoted group of Cézannists in the world, trying to solve anew many of Cézanne's problems of color and structure, each artist following to a logical conclusion one or another of the master's methods. Rojdestvenski and Lentulov are very close to Cézanne's early style when he was still an Impressionist, and their own work is therefore as much preoccupied with light and air and with structure although they use even greater distortion than Cézanne. Kontchalovski, one of the most prolific of the group, is perhaps nearest to Cézanne in his landscapes, except that his color is brighter and his brush work exhibits a more deliberate virtuosity. Falk is a vigorous painter with a keen sense for the solidity of objects. Mashkov is the most classic of the group, calm and serene in his compositions. Grishtchenko and Shevtchenko combined their Cézannism with something of Primitivism and a little of Cubism. Artists like Larionov, Gontcharova, Burliuk and Tatlin who were originally with the Jack of Diamonds group later formed groups of their own.

Passing from the Right and Center to the Left we come to the Futurists, as all Russian modernists were called. The Futurists were products of the literary and artistic bohemia, contesting the hegemony of the con-

servative artists (especially the Decadents), and intent upon delivering "a slap in the face of public opinion" [Burliuk's phrase]. In spite of a certain Slavophilism, their work was in the main parallel with and derivative of Western European modern art. The divisions within Futurism, while fluid, frequently changing and overlapping, present nevertheless easily definable characteristics. There were in the first place the Cubists, Morgunov, Exter, Udaltzova, Popova, Kliutzis, Pevsner, Puni and Shevtchenko, who, having renounced linear and aerial perspective, had evolved the dissociation method of composition. They went around natural objects and inside of them, as it were; showed them from multiple angles of vision by representing them simultaneously from the front, back and sides. Out of these elements they then composed a picture which did not depend for its appeal on the resemblance to any known object but on the relation of the pictorial elements—color, line, planes—among themselves.

The next school, the Suprematists, which included Malevitch, Rosanova, Exter, Rodtchenko, Drevin, Puni and Lissitzki, tried to carry Cubism to its logical conclusion, and this resulted in complete pictorial abstraction. Suprematism treated every picture as a flat surface. Its basic principles were: economy of pictorial means, rhythm in their interrelation and universality of their appeal. The factors most consonant with these principles they found to be simple elementary geometric forms and pure spectral colors. They sought to distribute these factors so as to obtain rhythm of related planes and balance of color masses.

Contrary to the intellectualism and materialism of other schools, the Expressionists are spiritual, intuitive and introspective. Their most typical artists are Kandin-

ski, Chagal, Burliuk and Filonov. They all exhibit an intricate design, inchoate fantasy and subjective symbolism, although, being Expressionists, each is individual. Kandinski, for example, is chiefly known for his abstract decorative paintings of moods which he calls Impressions, Improvisations and Compositions, depending on their degree of abstraction. Chagal is a fantastic story teller, demolishing houses and dissecting people as his fancy pleases him, rich in color, exquisite in detail and whimsical in humor. Burliuk employs every modernist practice and likes to invest his work with a complex symbolism of social, psychologic and sometimes even pathologic significance. Filonov reveals a sensibility poignantly alert to every vibration of the surrounding world which his mind refracts as a tormented cataclysm. His weird visions stand strangely apart from everything known in Russian art.

THE FUTURISTS

These were the most important schools on the Right, Left and Center functioning actively before and all through the Revolution. However, the law of social gravitation to the ruling class became operative from the very start, so that members of practically every tendency mentioned sooner or later veered definitely towards the Revolution, the Futurists first of all. In the general confusion of war and civil war, many recognized conservative artists fled the country; many others who remained at first refused to compromise with the Revolution, showing either hostility or indifference. The radicals were quick to take advantage of the unique opportunity to place themselves at the helm. They immediately discovered an inherent affinity between themselves and the Revolution and laid down the theory of

Comfut (Communism-Futurism). In a hundred different ways they endeavored to prove that in essence and origin Futurism was the art of the Revolution. Had not Futurism foreshadowed the impending catastrophe? Had not the Futurists, like the Communists, themselves revolted against accepted standards and been considered outcasts? The collapse of the old social system should mean also the collapse of old art which it engendered. Futurism is creative like the Revolution; just as the Soviets have broken with the past to create a new State, so Futurism has broken with the past to create a new art which alone can concentrate the essence of the Revolution in a pictorial form that would have universal import and eventually become universal property.

More far-reaching than the theory of the Futurists was their practice, for, aided by the machinery of the Soviets, the radicals inaugurated a tremendous program of reform, constructive and destructive, intended to be no less thorough-going in the field of art than were the reforms of the Soviets in the political and economic fields.

They abolished the hated Imperial Academy, founded a free Collegium of Artists in its place and reorganized the entire art education of the country. They helped to reorganize old museums and open new ones (Museums of Artistic Culture), to transfer private art collections to the State and open them to the public; they issued new publications; they met the popular thirst for information and education by arranging lectures, travelling exhibitions, study circles and clubs in the army, navy and factories; and established a chain of art schools throughout Russia reaching into parts that have never known art education before. They helped to organize the artists into a union; they fanned the revolutionary enthusiasm by doing posters for walls and trains, erecting monuments

and staging revolutionary mass festivals on an unprecedented scale. Artists like Altman, Puni, Sterenberg and Annenkov in conjunction with musicians, actors, acrobats, and directors were vested with extraordinary power, granted all available resources, human and material. In such mass celebrations as the First of May, the Paris Commune, the Storming of the Winter Palace, the Hymn of Emancipated Labor, army, navy and factory workers participated in ten, fifty and a hundred thousand.

CONSTRUCTIVISM

All this activity culminated in *Constructivism* (1920). Distinguished by such gifted artists as Tatlin, Lissitzki, Rodtchenko, Medunetzki, Popova, Altman, Ioganson, Mituritch, Gabo, Pevsner, Varst, Kliun, Kliutzis, G. and V. Sternberg, Tchaikov, and such able critics as Arvatov, Brick, Aksionov, Gan, Ehrenburg, Punin, Tarabukin, Kushner, Constructivism forms perhaps the most typical school of the Revolution. The Constructivists attempted the most ambitious revision of esthetic theory and practice of modern times. Just as the Renaissance, rising on the wreck of Medievalism, created the easel picture, perfectly suited to the individualism of the epoch, so must collectivism, according to the Constructivists, rising on the wreck of Capitalism create a new esthetic language to meet the requirements of the new collectivity. All easel painting, whether Realist or Impressionist, Cubist or Futurist, is a reactionary remnant of Capitalism born of the artist's individual vision and appealing to the buyer's individual taste.

The Revolution, the Constructivists said, requires an art that will have roots in the standardized industry of its time, embody the collective aspiration of the revolu-

tionary workers; an art which, by making its appeal through vision to consciousness, will mould the will of the masses to revolutionary ends. This aim could be attained by choosing the materials which form the daily environment of the workers and which are the true product of our age: steel, concrete, glass, paper, coal; by making a craftsman's thorough study of them and by combining them with scientific precision into forms appropriate to the ends sought. Every material—wood, stone, iron, paper—has its own properties, its own functions, and must therefore also suggest the form into which it might be embodied. Wood and glass, for example, cannot be used interchangeably without lessening the quality of the work. The material must suggest the form, the form must be relevant to the material. In his utilization of these materials the new artist, who gives up the representation of existing objects for the creation of a world of new objects, will communicate to his work the constructiveness and organization in the life about him. This does not mean that he will copy the machine; he will build his own work with the same precision of clearly defined form with the same order in the mathematical relation of parts, with the same economy in the choice of means and the nice adjustment of structure to function.

In accordance with the new esthetics a new terminology was invented. Artists no longer composed or painted pictures imitative of reality or indicative of moods; they "constructed," "produced," "fashioned" objects purporting to embody the structural logic of the age. There is sufficient variety in the work of the several artists to distinguish easily one from the other: the geometrically forshortened "Pro-uns" of Lissitzki, the "polychrome objects" of Altman, the "counter-reliefs" of Tatlin,



Construction (*Gabo*)

the "constructions" of Rodtchenko, the "moving objects" of Gabo, as well as the work of other Constructivists.

However, the most significant aspect of Constructivism, according to its own theorists, lies not in its esthetic achievements but in its utilitarianism. The Constructivists have always spoken with scorn of esthetic pre-occupations, while their opponents called them imposters and pointed out that all constructions were, in fact, merely that. Nevertheless, the Constructivists continued the fight. The word "art" itself became almost a term of abuse. Gan said: "We declare irreconcilable war on art." Art is no longer useful, but the artist has still an important function to perform. His business is not to decorate life but to organize it. If it is important for the revolutionary artist to mould the new social personality, it is more important still to devote his creative faculties to the productive industrial processes and so reshape the environment that it should function with mechanical precision. This desire which had earlier found expression among Constructivists in experiments with industrial materials, later turned to projects that had the appearance of the practical. Among them were Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International* and Lissitzki's project for a speaker's rostrum.

Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International* was planned to house various national and international Soviet institutions; it purported to embody creative and utilitarian aims and to synthesize art and science. It was to be built in the form of a huge iron spiral leaning at an angle of forty-five degrees, measuring four hundred meters in height and enclosing three stories all made of glass. The stories in the form of cube, pyramid and cylinder were to rotate at the velocities of a year, a

month, and a day respectively. They were to be enclosed in an enormous thermos insuring the conservation and distribution of heat and regulation of temperature. The monument was to be thoroughly equipped with the most up-to-date mechanical and electrical apparatus such as wireless, radio, telephone, telegraph, etc.

Much smaller in scale, though still very ambitious, was the project of Lissitzki for a speaker's rostrum to be erected in a public square. It was to be built of iron, concrete and glass. The lowest part, the foundation, was to contain a motor to put in motion the several parts of the rostrum. A crane-like elevator, encased by glass was to carry speakers, invited guests and visitors to the first, lower balcony, intended also as a waiting room. When the speaker's turn came, he was to be taken up to another story and to enter a balcony, closed before his arrival. Just as the speaker stepped on it, the balcony was to move forward so as to dominate the whole view around. By the use of a megaphone, his voice would be magnified and concentrated to be heard by all the people assembled in the square. At the very top a large screen was fixed on which could be shown timely slogans in the day-time and cinema performances at night.

There were numerous other projects of a similar character. Professor Landovski planned buildings for people, schools, and entire communities which would embody a union of architecture, engineering and the plastic arts. None of these projects were ever realized. Towards its third and fourth years the prestige of Constructivism was beginning to wane. Its opponents were becoming more vociferous and their strictures were listened to with attention in influential circles. They ridiculed without mercy the *machinolatry* of Constructivism; the contradictions between its profession of uncompromising utili-

tarianism and the wild fantasy of its actual performance. They called the Constructivists the spawn of Capitalism, the putrefying corpse of decadence, etc. Then, too, with the introduction of the New Economic Policy, government subsidies were reduced. Finally, while some Constructivists dropped out, and others frankly avowed their continued interests in art and esthetics, the remaining few decided to carry their theory to its logical conclusion and did turn, in the end, to practical activities making book covers, designing furniture, painting posters, working in the cinema, architecture and the theatre. The influence of Constructivism has been especially wide and lasting in the latter two.

While Constructivism was disintegrating, the older schools were gradually reorganizing their semi-defunct groupings and were becoming more and more assertive. The years 1923 and 1924, which were critical for the radical artist, were also years in which the conservatives were rapidly recouping their forces. As noted previously, they never disappeared from view entirely; there were scattered exhibitions of all schools from the very first, but the radicals predominated in influence. Now, however, new and old tendencies multiplied with amazing rapidity, showing their work in countless exhibitions. The civil war was over and a greater social stability established. There was a revival of interest in everyday life, in a new revolutionary genre. The State resumed the acquisition of paintings and sculpture for its museums; a new private patron, too, reappeared demanding portraits, landscapes, etc.

AKHRR

Among the numerous schools, tendencies and exhibitions (New Society of Artists, Society of Easel Painters,

Four Arts, Twenty-Two Artists, World of Art, Travellers, Association of Russian Artists, New Tendencies in Art, Circle, Wing, etc., etc.) the most imposing in the last ten years, if judged by the number of its exponents, its wide popularity, government support, the variety of styles, is without doubt the AKHRR (Artists' Association of Revolutionary Russia). The program of principles of the AKHRR is very simple: it is to depict faithfully the history, the life, the episodes of past and present revolutions in the widest interpretation of the term—the revolt of Stenka Razin, the people's suffering under the Czar, the Revolution of 1905, the evils of present Capitalism abroad, the lives of revolutionary heroes, etc. This is the only link connecting the hundreds of artists and the thousands of pictures exhibited yearly. Otherwise, the styles are almost as many as the artists themselves. For example there is Archipov from the Travellers, Yuon from The World of Art, Mashkov from the Jack of Diamonds, etc. Nevertheless among the leading members of the Association, there exists a preference for the ideas, the technique and the general approach of the Travellers. Like the Travellers who placed their art in social service, who attached great importance to the theme, had contempt for pure esthetics and were only concerned with a faithful portrayal of certain phases of reality seen in certain light, the members of AKHRR are interested in doing the same thing for their own day—to illustrate the leading slogans of the Revolution, its past history, its present struggles, its hopes and fears and its eventual triumph. That is why they call their work "heroic realism." A critic from the Constructivist camp, Tchujak, dubbed it contemptuously "heroic servilism." The remaining staunch Constructivists, as one might expect, bitterly denounce the whole tendency as reac-

tionary and hypocritical: reactionary, because it is attempting to revive a method and approach logical in its day but totally inadequate to express the spirit of an epoch entirely different; hypocritical, because it fawns upon what it thinks is the wish of the established order, and portrays the heroic struggle of the young Soviet Republic with such little interest and sincerity that the result is frequently a travesty on the true revolutionary idea.

The AKHRR insists that its duty to humanity is to aid the Revolution, not in the incomprehensible language of modernism, which is nothing but bourgeois individualism, but in the popular language of realism. "We will represent today; the life of the Red Army, the life of the workers, the peasants, the revolutionists, the heroes of labor." As a result every exhibition of AKHRR is full of pictures of barricades, executions, Soviet delegations, May Day celebrations, army parades, work in factories, and, inevitably, some incidents from the life of Lenin.

A painting thoroughly typical of the tendency is Brodsky's huge painting *The Second Congress of the International*. In this attempt at collective portraiture, the presidium, committees and orators on the platform, the international delegates in the hall along the aisles, and among the pillars such important personages as Lenin, Stalin, Trotzky, Zinoviev, Bukharin, Lunacharski—about three hundred in all—are done with the most scrupulous fidelity. Numerous reproduced with a key to the more important personalities and distributed throughout Russia, this picture caused a fierce controversy in every camp. Attacked as graceless reporting without any artistic quality, as sycophancy before the established régime, it was defended with equal

vehemence. The most that its defenders could say for it was that it was an honest, scrupulous account of a historic event, done with a certain amount of capable craftsmanship, and therefore of great historic if not artistic value.

In order to make its ideas known to wide masses of people AKHRR, following the example of the Travellers, sends its exhibitions throughout Russia. It has about fifty affiliated branches in all parts of Russia among its numerous nationalities. Its exhibitions have been attended by as many as 100,000 visitors.

An interesting experiment was tried for one of its latest and largest exhibitions. A hundred artists were commissioned by the government to travel to all parts of Russia, to observe at first hand life in the numerous autonomous Republics and to record in paint what they saw. The artists were away about a year, visited the Tartar Republic, the Georgian, Ukrainian, Tchuvash and other smaller nationalities in many distant corners of the Soviet Union, and all brought their labors back to the AKHRR exhibition entitled *Life and Customs of the Nationalities in USSR*. Much of the work was definitely incompetent, a good deal of it had purely ethnographic value and only a small part had genuine merit as art. The great importance of such an exhibition was perhaps the novelty of the whole undertaking. And though it received all the praise that it deserved, since beside leading to a closer acquaintance of the minor nationalities with one another as well as with the larger ones, it also offered possibilities for true creative effort. The same undertaking has been receiving wide censure because of the pot-boiling methods indiscriminately employed by so many of the artists. It is being recognized everywhere that though revolutionary themes in the service of the State are not in

themselves objectionable, they cannot alone constitute art, unless treated with technical competence. This criticism is beginning to bear fruit; many of the exhibitors are tending to what is called synthetic realism, somewhat parallel to the *Neue Sachlichkeit* in Germany—a method in which the technical achievements of all modern schools are utilized in the artist's close contact with reality.

Since there must always be a Center where there are a Right and a Left, one finds a number of smaller groupings in the Soviet Union that recognize the importance of the contemporary theme, the social implications of art, and at the same time are firmly determined to combine these with a full technical equipment. One of the most typical of these is the group already mentioned OST (Society of Easel Painters) comprising among others the artists Sterenberg, Williams, Denissovski, Tishler, Deyneka, Pimenov, Labas, Shifrin. All of its artists, trained in the late tradition of the radical tendencies, Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism and Expressionism, apply their knowledge to the solution of modern artistic problems. They are extremely thorough in the treatment of the surface of a painting, mat or glossy, transparent or opaque, and are very meticulous over every detail and composition of each picture.

An immense amount of labor has accumulated in the graphic arts, in book illustration, *ex libris*, wood carving, lithography, etc. The artists had new tasks before them, designing new money, stamps, trade marks, posters and book jackets as well as illustrating the numberless books and tracts that have appeared in the course of twelve years. Beginning with the retrospectivism of Benois and Somov, following with the work of Tchechonin, Mitrochin, Falileyev, Favorski, Annenkov, Kravtchenko

and dozens of others, Soviet artists have done graphic work of an amount and quality that would rank high in any country of the world.

ART SCHOOLS

Practically all of the art produced in the last ten years has been the work of artists of pre-revolutionary training. It was assumed as self evident that the new artists of the revolutionary era would require a new education. Accordingly, from the time when the old academy was dissolved, the question of art instruction occupied the attention of the ablest artists and educators of the country. Such leading institutions as the Leningrad Academy of Fine Arts and the Moscow School of Painting, Architecture and Sculpture were thoroughly re-organized. The pupils now have a voice in the selection of professors, in devising new methods of teaching, in planning the curriculum, in the administration of the school's business. The pupil begins with the preparatory section which gives him a general introduction to and acquaintance with, the elements of all pictorial arts, drawing, modeling, architectural draftsmanship, carving, printing, color, and design. He then passes to some special study which may be painting or some branch of it like theatrical decoration; or it may be sculpture, architecture or any of the graphic arts. He continues to devote part of his time to the preparatory section, now in connection with the special field he has chosen.

One of the most important principles underlying art instruction in the Soviet Union, and in fact of its entire educational system, is the organization of the schools into self-governing communes. They are made self-supporting as much as possible so that while the pupils receive



Spring Landscape (*A. Kuprin*)

a certain amount from society, they learn at the start of their career the duty of paying in service for what they receive. The pupils are constantly made to remember that they are an organic part of a functional not an acquisitive society, that their work in school is an adjustment to the world outside and that their education is to prepare them for a more efficient participation in the life of society. With this conception in view, academic work in class is supplemented by productive work outside. The students are made to go out at every opportunity, to work part of winter and all of summer in factories and work shops; they are gradually led into a complete practical knowledge of their work in its actual operation. Students of the graphic arts go to printing establishments where they work at book making, lithography and the photo mechanical processes. Painters do posters and wall decorations; sculptors learn to cast in metal and cut in stone. Closer contact with the world of labor is further established by taking groups of students regularly to certain factories where they can study the rhythm of human labor and make sketches on the spot.

Along with the organization and establishment of art institutions of a purely professional nature, there are other institutions of theory and research whose purpose is to gather, classify, analyze the existing knowledge on every art, to report upon this in lectures, books and magazines, to encourage original research and international exchange. The most important of these institutions are the Leningrad State Institute of Art History and the Moscow State Academy of Artistic Sciences. The work is organized and distributed among the main departments of Music, Fine Arts, Literature, The Theatre and Cinema, which in turn are subdivided into sections

such as Ancient, Oriental, Old Russian, Modern Western European Art, etc. Parallel with these divisions which are occupied with classification and analysis of the arts in historic perspective are other sections devoted to an original examination and investigation of the science and methodology of art along psycho-physical, sociological and philosophic lines. The institutions attract students from the most distant corners of the Soviet Union and gather about them leading artists, writers, economists, pedagogues, musicians. They have been of great practical assistance to press workers, museums, teachers, in the preparation of bibliographies and surveys and in mapping out courses and arranging exhibitions.

MUSEUMS

No art agency, perhaps, has been more profoundly affected and more extensively refashioned than the museum. For some decades before the Revolution the Russian museums were in a state of chaos. State and city, Ministry of War and Ministry of Education, church and private patrons, separately supported certain museums and separately decided on their policies—which were in most cases policies of neglect. With the coming of the Revolution, the museums fell into the hands of the Soviets in all their disorder and without a guiding principle of any kind. A special Museum Section was created by the Commissariat of Education which set to work at once. The first step was to take a thorough inventory of all art treasures in public and private hands. Accordingly a special decree was issued making it compulsory for everyone to register with the government every art object wherever found. Failure to comply with this decree constituted a criminal offense. Gov-

ernment emissaries were sent to all parts of Russia to collaborate with the local authorities in the work of examining monasteries, churches, landowners' estates.

It took several years to examine the immense material, consisting of hundreds of thousands of art objects, most of which were returned to the owners; only those being retained which had museum value. Such outstanding buildings and collections as those of Shtchukin and Morozov in Moscow, Yussupov and Stroganov in Lenin-grad, country estates like Tolstoi's Yasnaya Polyana, and monasteries and churches like the Kremlin, Suzdal Monastery, the Troitse-Sergieva Lavra were nationalized outright. Having completed the record of existing art treasures, the next important problem was to unify the work of the museums, to devise a plan and system for the entire country in order to avoid all useless waste and repetition. All museums were then classified as to scope (Central, Regional, Local) and type (Art, Human History, Natural History, etc.) so that each museum had its own specific sphere of activity. A few examples will make this process clear. The Shtchukin and Morozov collections of modern art (among the finest in the world) which had a completely independent existence before the revolution, have now been reorganized into one State Museum of Modern Western European Art, the whole having been augmented by additions from other sources, notably from the Rumyantzev Museum. A similar parallelism existed in the large Tretyakov Gallery and the small Tzvetkov Gallery. They were both combined into a central museum of Russian art, augmented again with Russian works from the same Rumyantzev Museum. The latter was in turn changed in similar fashion, though along entirely different lines.

The museums have done monumental work in the

expert restoration of works of painting, sculpture and architecture (restoration is a State monopoly), in collecting folk art of the numerous smaller nationalities. The museums possess technical shops, libraries and photographic archives so ingeniously assorted as to make reference extremely easy. They have been completely democratized and are always alive with activity, planning, changing exhibitions of old and new art, arranging excursions and tours under expert guidance. Their visitors number in the hundreds of thousands.

It is evident from the foregoing that the state of Soviet art and the evolution of Soviet art institutions have been profoundly affected by the course of the Revolution. The liberated energies of a people have been seeking to attach themselves to every phase of art as well as life, though not always with success. There are dangers that proceed not alone from enemies but from friends also, and even the Communist Party warns against *comtchvanstvo* (Communist conceit). Present Soviet art is still an art of a transition period, full of conflicts like the epoch itself, straddled between a period almost dead and another period not fully grown. Perhaps the new art can only be the work of a new man, himself the product of a new social system. It is to the erection of this new system that Communist energies are dedicated.

SOVIET ARCHITECTURE

Before the revolution Russian architecture, generally speaking, was characterized by an eclectic retrospectivism, tending either towards Greek and Renaissance style or towards old Russian style (Novgorod, Pskov, etc.). Among the more prominent architects were Shtzusev, Shtchuko, Fomin and Joltovski who carried over their



Football (*I. Chaikov*)

practice into the post-revolutionary period. While some of these architects adapted these dead styles with some skill, others frequently descended to plain imitation. Apart from the fact that the entire pre-revolutionary tendency in architecture was out of harmony with more advanced contemporary currents elsewhere, the architects failed to work upon a plane of mutual understanding with the engineers whose services occasionally had to be utilized. Engineer and architect each worked independent of the other, the first being concerned mainly with the technical equipment of the building, the second with its surface decoration.

With the coming of the Revolution and the extreme need of rebuilding the property destroyed, with the tremendous impulse towards new construction of every kind, it was natural to expect a renewed interest in and a revival of architecture. The Soviet government initiated a large building program and, since the Revolution was definitely and uncompromisingly a break with the immediate and distant past, it would have been illogical for it to look with favor on imitations of traditional style in architecture. At first architecture was indeed in a state of chaos, constantly agitated by theoretic battles between the older and the newer architects. Then something very curious happened. A factor without immediate relationship to architecture helped, nevertheless, to affect it powerfully; Constructivism, with its repeated advocacy of utility, its admiration for the machine, its insistence on the break with the past, influenced architecture along with the theatre and the cinema. Of course, Constructivism was not the sole factor. A second important factor was contemporary architecture in France, Germany, Holland and, in smaller measure, the United States.

Although several tendencies still exist even among the younger of the Russian architects, their points in common are more evident. To begin with, they all seek to answer in a practical manner the actual needs of the present moment, to study each particular problem in itself, whether the problem is presented by the building of a factory, coöperative house, restaurant or store. Since architecture is planned on a large scale, there is an attempt everywhere to introduce coördination in the planning of single structures but more especially in projects for workers' settlements and city planning. In most cases, particularly in larger cities, a given project for a railroad station, a factory, a club, a hospital or restaurant is chosen competitively from the work of architects of every tendency. During such competitions there is always a violent discussion among partisans of all tendencies.

The younger Soviet architects speak constantly of "functionalism," by which they mean a close correspondence between the structure of any given building and the function of its various parts, between its physical aspect and shape and the use to which they are put. A palace of labor, a sanatorium, a rest house, each serving a different function would each require a special structure. The architect works, as it were, from the interior outward. Thus in the planning of a hospital, instead of beginning with some classical exterior regardless of the essential interior structure, as would have been the case before the Revolution, the Soviet architect first makes a thorough examination of all necessary requirements, such as the number and location of laboratories, wards, pharmacies, operating room, corridors, waiting rooms, etc.; then, if he is not himself an engineer, he consults with one; after which he finally

proceeds to make the plans for the building. For this reason, since the functions of various parts of a building are not always necessarily organized symmetrically, the newer Soviet structures are very often asymmetrical.

The younger architects—and many of the older ones who have adapted themselves to the new situation—discourage excessive use of ornament, always utilize the newest methods and materials, prefer machine labor and products wherever possible, and advocate the use of standardized articles such as windows, doors, plumbing fixtures, etc. Wherever these new architectural structures (The Izvestia Building, The Lenin Institute in Moscow, The Pravda Building in Leningrad, The House of State Industries in Kharkov) rise, they form a striking contrast in their gray and bare simplicity to the colorful and ornate buildings of the pre-revolutionary period. Kharkov, the capital of the Ukraine Soviet Republic, is architecturally, together with Moscow, the most interesting Soviet city. In fact it probably surpasses the latter in the concentrated and logically planned series of its new State buildings. The House of State Industry, recently completed, forms the largest set of buildings in Soviet Russia. Made of concrete, steel and with a generous employment of glass, the three main bodies vary from six to twelve stories. They are equipped with numerous elevators; closed bridges rising high above the street level connect the main buildings so that the employes can pass easily over the two streets that run through the entire series. Other new buildings on a similar scale are to go up in the neighborhood around Dzerjinski Square. Plans have already been made and practical steps taken to put up in the next few years two more large structures, the House of the State Government and the House of the Coöperative. These

in part will go up as high as eighteen stories and will concentrate on their premises numerous state institutions, banks, coöperative organizations, post office, telegraph and every government institution, a cinema theatre, state archives, museums, restaurants, etc.

Among the most active groupings of the younger architects are OSA (Society of Contemporary Architects); the Vesnin brothers, architects of the Telephone and Telegraph Building in Moscow; M. Ginsburg, who did the Soviet Capitol of Daghestan; Golossov, who designed the post office in Kharkov; ASNOVA (Association of New Architects)—Ladovski, Lissitski and Glagoyev. Theoretically OSA, somewhat more rigidly "functionalist," stresses more the engineering function of architecture, while ASNOVA considers architecture as a separate science, distinct from engineering. In reality the differences between the two societies is rather tenuous. OSA uses functional elements decoratively; ASNOVA frequently stresses the importance of "functionalism." Perhaps a more essential difference between the two is that the members of the first are in most cases active practitioners, the members of the second are mostly teachers and theoreticians. There are still other groups like VOPRA (Society of Proletarian Architects), Urban Architects and many others. New graduates from the architectural schools are constantly swelling the architects' ranks. The higher schools of architecture in Leningrad, Moscow and Kharkov have been completely reorganized. The most capable graduates are awarded fellowships and sent abroad for post-graduate study.

The movements in Soviet architecture, as in painting, music, and the cinema, did not, of course, develop in a vacuum. Technically, modern Russian art has much in

common with developments in western Europe and the United States; indeed, Soviet Russia is anxious to learn all it can from the countries of the West, and in several instances has obtained the services of American architects, such as Albert Kahn, who designed the Ford works, to supervise the building of industrial plants in the Soviet Union.

One very important growing tendency must be noted in conclusion. Soviet architecture is seeking to develop the type of building that will answer the universal tendency towards the collectivization of economic institutions, of the people's life and customs, of the transition from the corner grocery to the central State store, from the private kitchen and laundry to the coöperative restaurant and communal laundry. The elimination of daily routine from the privacy of the family increases the opportunities for cultural activities, not in isolation, but in friendly coöperation with other members of the Soviet Union, and gives rise to new public schools, nurseries, kindergartens, clubs, stadiums—all stepping-stones to that state of collective existence which Friedrich Engels characterized as the passage from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom.

CHAPTER VI

SOVIET MUSIC

by Joseph Freeman

THE BACKGROUND OF RUSSIAN MUSIC

Formal Russian music developed in the Imperial Court in the seventeenth century, when the old nobility, anxious to imitate the aristocratic culture of Western Europe, imported members of the Neapolitan school like Arraya, Galuppi, Cimarosa and Paiziello to compose operas for them. Italian importations were followed by French importations. It was not till the close of the eighteenth century that there appeared native Russian composers with nationalist aspirations. The native musical movement was stimulated by the nationalistic sentiments, intensified by the French Revolution, which permeated certain sections of the Russian nobility early in the nineteenth century and took a sharp political form in the uprising of December, 1825. This movement produced several amateur composers, technically ill-equipped but sufficiently moved by the spirit of nationalism to turn to Russian folk-song for motifs and melodies. It reached its highest point in Michael Glinka (1804-57) whose compositions, profoundly influenced by native motifs as well as by west-European music, were the best that Russia had produced up to that time. Glinka's music reached a small audience, consisting chiefly of the intellectual sections of the nobility and

the rising middle class. As an organized social class the bourgeoisie was still too weak to support Russian music, whose dependence on the decaying court and nobility was becoming an increasingly heavy burden. Despite this handicap, Russian music continued to develop along nationalistic lines. The national tradition bequeathed by Glinka was carried on by the so-called Russian National School, consisting of Caesar Cui, Rimski-Korsakov, Balakirev, Borodine and Mussorgski. These men, three of whom were musical geniuses of the first order, were self-taught amateurs who ignored academic rules and drew deeply from the storehouse of Russian folk-song and from their romantic contemporaries in western Europe, chiefly Berlioz, Schumann and Liszt. Their original and colorful music was also influenced by the folk melodies of the Caucasus and other regions of Russia with oriental traditions. Their Russian contemporaries, Tchaikovski and Rubenstein, composed more under the influence of western Europe, though strains of native folk music beat through many of their compositions.

The national traditions in Russian music were continued by a new musical group which, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, found its support in the rising middle class. The lumber merchant Bieliayev gathered around him a large group of composers, many of them mediocre, but some of unusual talent like Tañeyev, Scriabine, and Glazounov. Unconscious of its relation to politics or social classes, Russian music continued to develop in the salons of the nobility and the middle class, and by the time of the World War it had behind it a wealth of tradition and the beginning of new developments in such composers as Stravinski, Prokofiev, Rachmaninov, Metner, Gretchaninov and Miaskovski.

Intimately bound up with the cultured classes, Russian music was hard hit by the Revolution. Russian musicians were bewildered; many of them fled abroad, including singers like Chaliapin, pianists like Borovski and Orlov, conductors like Koussevitsky and composers like Stravinski, Metner and Rachmaninov. From the viewpoint of Soviet musical criticism, this flight brought a certain sterility into the work of the composers who abandoned Russia. An example of such criticism may be obtained in English in Leonid Sabañeyev's *Modern Russian Composers*.¹ Sabañeyev is himself a Russian composer and musical critic who has been intimately connected with Russian music, both before and after the Revolution. Until 1926 he was president of the Association of Contemporary Music in Moscow. He is quoted extensively here as typifying the new attitude of mind which the Revolution has created in Soviet musical circles. Thus, in discussing Stravinski, Sabañeyev characterizes him as the "most resplendent and significant figure" of modern music, but adds that Stravinski believes in nothing; that he is a sceptic who creates rationally for the western European, more specifically Parisian, market; his works are often caricatures of Russian tradition, turned out by a great Russian composer divorced from his natural environment who must amuse the "enlightened West."

Rachmaninov and Metner practically ceased to compose after abandoning Russia. Prokofiev alone of this group returned to the Soviet Union in 1926, where he gave a number of concerts before large and enthusiastic audiences.

¹ International Publishers, New York.

MUSIC AND THE MASSES

Some of the older composers remained in Russia throughout the Revolution, but the Russian musical world as a whole was for a while shaken to its foundations: the social classes on which it had lived had been dethroned; but the demand for music was growing among the workers and peasants, Red Army men, and students who were clamoring for good concerts. To satisfy this mass demand, the People's Commissariat of Education organized concert groups and orchestras throughout the Soviet Union. The authorities had to solve the problem of arranging programs suitable for the new audience created by the Revolution, which was not satisfied with incongruous combinations of classical composers. As in the case of poems, novels and dramas, the workers demanded new contents in music and a new attitude in performers and composers; they felt that music expressing romantic, sensuous and intimate moods was out of place amidst civil war, famine, and counter-Revolution; they demanded music that was heroic and monumental.

Those composers who accepted the Revolution attempted to respond to this demand, but to create revolutionary music which at the same time maintained a high artistic level was no easy matter. Habits of composition developed over generations are not easily discarded. Besides, could there be such a thing as proletarian music? The debates on this subject raged in music as they did in the other arts. Composers of the older generation continued to compose along lines established before the Revolution; on the other hand, the younger generation of musicians, moulded by the Revolution, were animated by a different attitude toward life and art. Most of

them considered even Prokofiev, Scriabine, Metner and Rachmaninov as belonging to the distant past—from the social point of view—though in musical structure they followed these men to a large extent.

SOVIET COMPOSERS

Among the older composers who have continued to create after the Revolution is Nikolai Miaskovski, who began to attract attention in 1917. Earlier in his career he had been overshadowed by figures like Scriabine and Metner. In style he has been compared to Tchaikovski. His music is filled with a pessimism which, in the words of Sabañeyev, insists on "universal vanity and uselessness" and expresses the philosophy of "annihilation and hopelessness." Miaskovski is still productive and all his eight symphonies have been performed by Soviet orchestras. Sabañeyev characterizes him thus:

"This cruel auto-sadist has lovingly selected the field of wicked melancholy, of neurasthenic and hysterical emotion, of hopeless moods which do not even possess the fascination of force for his world. This art, basically unhealthy, anti-social in its tendency toward isolated individualism, might nevertheless prove artistically valuable and possibly even a genuine treasure, if on the scales of the historical 'test of time' it turned out that the potentialities of musical talent underlying it are sufficient to overcome the terrible psychologic material with which the author operates, and which will yield artistically only to the talent of a genius."

Miaskovski has attempted to understand the Revolution, and there are several revolutionary themes in his Sixth Symphony, while the slow part of his *Eighth Symphony* has a theme based on Bashkir melodies—which in



Eastern City (*P. Kuznetsov*)

pre-revolutionary days would have been considered a "nationalistic" tendency, though today the practice is part of the Soviet policy of encouraging the indigenous culture of the minor nationalities. Miaskovski, moreover, has been influential among the younger musicians whom he has taught at the Moscow Conservatory where he is at present a professor.

Another composer who made his appearance in Scriabine's time but continues to work in the Soviet Union today is Samuel Feinberg. This composer, according to Sabañeyev, is a "romantic to the marrow of his bones," a "fantast, possessed by nightmares." His earliest sonatas were permeated with the spirit of Schumann. He developed into a composer of harmonies and rhythms, with almost no melody. He is a great master of his art—an art which, however, is not for the mass of people, but is permeated with the "aristocracy of creative spirit."

Mikhail Gnyesin, trained by Rimski-Korsakov, developed into a composer of national Jewish music. From early compositions like the Cantata *The Conqueror Worm* and his music to Blok's drama *The Rose and the Cross*, he evolved into a "Jewish Glinka," composing biblical operas like *The Youth of Abraham*. He is not productive as a composer, writing slowly and painfully. Gnyesin was among the older Russian composers who attempted to create revolutionary music. His *Sketch of a Symphonic Monument*, set to a poem by Serge Yessenin, attracted attention as an attempt toward revolutionary music. Yessenin's poem does not express the spirit of Communism nor the urge to build which is characteristic of the Soviet Union. "It is rather," says Sabañeyev, voicing Soviet opinion, "an echo of those unbridled moods which swept throughout the Russian land during the first years of the Revolution. And so,

Gnyesin, a revolutionary, when judged by his choice of text, appears to us rather the anarchist singer of unbridled liberty. Curious it is that the musical web of this piece proved to possess many traits in common with the style of the Russian National School. Gnyesin, as it were, returned from his Jewish Palestine to the fold of his teacher Rimski-Korsakov."

Another gifted composer in the Soviet Union who devotes himself to Jewish themes is Alexander Krein, who began his career as a follower of Scriabine, Grieg, and even to some extent of Debussy and Ravel. The break in Krein's creative work, according to Sabañeyev, began with his Jewish nationalism. He attempted to do for Jewish music what Chopin, Liszt, Glinka, and Grieg did for the music of their nations, namely "the fructification of personal creative art with the folk element." Krein is industrious and productive, and has written for the piano, as well as composed songs, chamber music and orchestral works. He has written symphonic poems like *Salome*, piano sonatas, and symphonies, and has set music to Jewish classics like Peretz's *The Night at the Old Market Place*. His brother, Gregory Krein, has also developed as a composer in the Jewish strain.

Of the older composers Nikolai Roslavyets is generally considered the most revolutionary from the social point of view. He also arrived on the Russian musical scene at the height of Scriabine's powers, and began as a modernist.

"Roslavyets began where Scriabine left off," Sabañeyev observes, "proclaiming a musical cathecism of a purely formal character, and constructing a new theory of harmonies which was to replace the old." Roslavyets is essentially an esthetic formalist, preferring a simple and clear style. He is a Marxist, and is con-

vinced that his theory of music as "organized tonal matter" fits in with the general Marxian ideas and with a social order created by the collective will. As a Marxist, he set himself the task of writing heroic music for the proletariat; but has had to make a number of concessions, and has learned to write in a simpler style for workers' clubs. Consequently his usual complex musical language has given way to a plainer one. Roslavyets has also written songs to revolutionary texts by contemporary Soviet poets. His *Trade Union Songs* and *Songs of the Revolution* are two volumes which express revolutionary moods and at the same time possess definite structural musical merit.

Another of the older Russian composers who continues to create under the Soviet régime is Serge Vassilyenko, who composed the music for the ballet, *The Beautiful Joseph*, which had a successful run in Moscow in 1926-27. Another pre-revolutionary composer, Reinhold Gliere, has written an opera based on the folk songs of the Near East, employing Turkish melodies and instruments, and has been working on a repertoire of revolutionary music. Julia Weisberg, working in the Glazunov tradition, has composed music to Blok's *The Twelve*, said to be one of the finest musical settings composed for this Symbolist poem. N. Zolotarioff, another composer in the Glazunov manner, born in 1873, is one of the oldest of living composers, but has written music on revolutionary themes, including an opera based on the Decembrist Revolt of 1825.

Glazunov himself is preoccupied with his duties as music teacher and concert director, and has been silent for the past ten years. The same is true of the well-known composers Ipolitov-Ivanov and Gretchaninov.

THE YOUNGER COMPOSERS

The younger Soviet composers are characterized by their moderation in musical experiments. "Extreme radicalism," observes Sabañeyev, "with its cult of sharp dissonances, its overthrow of former laws and modes of harmony and musical theory, so characteristic of the young composers of western Europe and America, is here almost entirely absent." Most of the younger Russian composers do not go beyond Scriabine and Prokofiev, sometimes even returning to Glazunov and Tchaikovski. In Leningrad two young composers, Shostakovistch and Scherbachov, both show strong signs of Glazunov's training. In Moscow, Scriabine's influence is visible in the work of young composers like Yevseyev and Kriukov. The latter, despite his youth, has already composed operas to Blok's poems *The Unknown Woman* and *The King in the Public Square*. Prokofiev's influence is noticeable in the work of Leonid Polovinkin (born 1900); while Leo Knipper (b. 1900) follows the style of Stravinski. Vasili Shirinski (b. 1904) is an impressionist, composing under the influence of Debussy and Ravel. His music for string quartets and violins has been highly praised. Shebalin (b. 1902) is a pupil of Miaskovski, but has aroused hopes that he may create a style of his own. To the school of Jewish music headed by Gnyessin and the Kreins belongs the young and energetic Vieprik (b. 1892) who is also influenced by Scriabin and Prokoffiev. An outstanding figure among the composers who have passed their first youth is Anatoli Alexandrov (b. 1889), a lyricist who had written fine songs, as well as chamber music and sonatas for the piano.

THE SOVIET OPERA

The Russian opera, like other branches of Russian music, was thrown into confusion by the Revolution. Order was established when the Soviet Government nationalized the opera houses. Several difficulties hampered the Soviet opera from the beginning. There was a lack of funds—since the country's resources were devoted primarily to the civil wars and the economic structure; the opera found it difficult to meet the demand of worker audiences for a repertoire in harmony with the spirit of the new epoch; and many of the talents of the old régime went abroad. Prior to the Revolution Russian opera was highly developed, especially in Leningrad, where productions like Strauss' *Electra* and Stravinski's *Nightingale* were performed with great power and brilliance before select audiences of the upper classes. The new audiences of workers brought forward by the Revolution at first found these operas and ballets too subtle and strange; nevertheless they followed opera with great interest. The very novelty of the experience stimulated curiosity. Workers' organizations received opera tickets at a discount, and the opera, particularly the ballet, increased in popularity, though the workers continue to look on it as an alien form of art belonging to a dead age. The opera's devotees are chiefly intellectuals.

During the past ten years the opera has made great strides, developing two important centres, one in Leningrad, the other in Moscow. This has always been the case in Russian music, where the two leading cities carried on a musical war, each with its own highly developed talents and traditions. The Leningrad opera follows the policy of developing modern operas, on the

theory that the new audience requires contemporary productions. Its repertoire includes Schreker's *Distant Bells*, Strauss' *Salome*, Prokofiev's *Love of Three Oranges*, as well as Stravinski's and Kshenick's ballets. The Leningrad opera revived, also with many technical improvements, the pre-revolutionary estheticism associated with the old Marinsky Theatre, with its classical ballet developed under the empire.

The Moscow opera, on the other hand, has been more conservative. The Great Theatre (*Bolshoi Theatre*) and other opera houses have revived classical operas like *Faust*, *Carmen*, and *Lohengrin*. The slowness of the Moscow opera's development is partly due to the immense size of the Bolshoi Theatre's stage and ensemble. This has necessitated limiting new productions to two or three operas a year, leaving little room for experimentation. On the other hand, the Moscow opera has attempted to improve the staging of the classics, resorting in many cases to the technique of Western Europe. Attempts have also been made to change the librettos in the direction of the prevailing ideology, but such changes nearly always resulted in failure. It may be noted that attempts to change the stories of *Faust* and *Boris Godunov* evokes bitter controversies in the press and in musical circles. The Bolshoi Theatre has maintained the highest standards in its chorus and orchestra and its productions of *Boris Godunov* and *The Love of Three Oranges* were marked by magnificent scenic effects.

The Moscow opera, as a whole, organized as the Moscow Academic Opera, has been under the direction of V. Losski, assisted by two talented scenic artists, F. Fedeorovski and I. Rabinovitch. The chorus and orchestra of the Bolshoi were kept on a high level due to

the efforts of V. I. Suk, A. N. Pozovski, N. S. Golovanov, and A. U. Avranek.

In addition to the Bolshoi Theatre, the Moscow Academic Opera includes the two opera studios of the Moscow Art Theatre, one named after Nemirovitch-Danchenko, the other after Stanislavski. Both Studios have become important factors in the musical life of the Soviet Union. Each in its own way has attempted to develop realism in the opera. The Nemirovitch-Danchenko Studio (which performed in New York in 1925) has produced classical operettas like *Madame Angot's Daughter*, *Carmencita*, and *La Perichole*. These productions were marked by brilliant scenes and a great deal of verve. The Stanislavski Studio has steadily fought against operatic routine. Stanislavski's system aims to synthesize the words, music, rhythm and action of the opera into one creative unit. His studio has produced chiefly Russian operas like *Eugene Onegin* and *The Czar's Bride*. Both Moscow Art Theatre Studios have shown that even without exceptional singers it is possible to bring new life into operatic production. Tairov's Kamerny Theatre has also produced classical operas with great success.

The Soviet opera has been weakest on the side of new works whose contents express the spirit of the new social order. While Soviet literature, movies, and the theatre have succeeded in producing many fine works reflecting Communist aspirations, the opera has developed few talents in this direction. This may possibly be attributed to the fact that the opera is a form best adapted to the exclusiveness and formality of court life rather than a civilization based on the masses of workers and peasants. The few attempts at revolutionary opera, such as Paschenko's *Eagle's Revolt* and Zolotaryev's

Decembrists did not go further than combining historical revolutionary episodes with old musical forms.

Among the national minorities, attempts have been made to develop independent operas. Georgia has its own opera for the first time and has its own operatic literature, notably the compositions of Palishvilli. In Soviet Armenia the composer Spenderyants is working toward the creation of a national opera; in Baku the Turco-Tartar opera has been compelled to order a Turkish opera from Glière, a Russian composer of Belgian origin; while the Ukraine has developed its own opera through the musical efforts of Yanovski and Zolotaryev.

REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC

In general, attempts to create a revolutionary musical repertoire encountered great difficulties. As in other fields of art, the aristocracy of Russian music at first stubbornly resisted the new order. The Russian musician who had matured under the disintegration of the old régime was a dreamer and mystic, a romantic, an esthete—never a political revolutionist or a Marxist. He could not grasp the new turn of events. Those few who did, attempted to compose songs for workers' choruses; some composed more elaborate pieces in the style of Mussorgski, using satire and irony against the bourgeoisie, the priests, the counter-revolutionists. The aged musician Kastalski, shortly before his death, composed an *Agricultural Symphony* as well as minor arrangements of revolutionary songs. Other composers attempting to write revolutionary music are Vasiliev-Buglay and Lobachov. The younger composer Triodine has written a revolutionary opera called *Stenka Razin* dealing with the leader of the seventeenth century peas-

ant revolt. From among the workers themselves there have developed composers like Dieshevov, who is trying to create a revolutionary style in music, turning away from bourgeois over-refinement. An outstanding revolutionary composer is Roslavyets, mentioned above, who has written the *Epistle to the Decembrists*, and the *March of the Soviet Militia* which was made an official march. Glière and Korchmaryov have also composed revolutionary songs. Gnyessin has written a *Sketch of a Symphonic Monument*, dedicated to the memory of the Revolution of 1905 and accompanied with a cantata set to text by Yessenin.

Sabañeyev reports that a sympathetic mood toward the Revolution is taking hold of contemporary Russian composers:

There now exists the formerly utterly impossible idea of writing music on revolutionary subjects; there has finally come a still greater doubt of the justice of former exclusiveness and the methods of secluded studio music composed for the few. The oligarchic attitude of the Russian musician who liked to feel himself a "priest," "one of the initiated few," begins to give way to the democratic idea of music for the widest possible masses, "music of the street" in the good sense of the word. The causes of this are clear. The former life of seclusion is broken up. The solitude of the private study as a rule does no longer really exist in Russia. The musical fabric which had become too elaborate and too fatal a cleavage separates it from the people, to whom this music is no music at all, but unpleasant noise. During recent years music as a whole has run into a blind alley, torn itself completely away from the masses, not only from the working masses but from all wide groups, and locked itself up in an isolated circle of snobs, esthetes and connoisseurs, of musical oysters. Torn away from the soil of the people and democracy, it is on the decline spiritually and formally, degenerating, becoming anemic,

rickety, languid, without fire. This is observed everywhere and not in Russia alone. In Russia it has become noticeable only because the class of snobs, esthetes for whom this subtle and refined music was written, has collapsed and vanished.

SOVIET CONCERTS

Among the most popular concerts in the Soviet Union have been those directed by foreign conductors. The first Western European conductor to break through the cultural blockade around Russia was Oscar Fried, who in 1921 conducted a series of Beethoven concerts in Moscow. He was followed by Klemperer, Weingartner, Kouts, Stidri, Monte and others, all of whom received an enthusiastic welcome from Russian audiences.

A unique phenomenon in Soviet music is the *Persimfans*, an orchestra which has attempted to bring the collectivist ideal into music. The *Persimfans* plays without a conductor, its success depending entirely on the coöperative efforts of the orchestra members. This orchestra was organized in Moscow in 1922. During the six years of its existence it has built up a wide repertoire, ranging from Bach to Honegger. It is an exceptionally well-organized orchestra in which the ensemble is able to play without being obscured by the spectacular rôle of the conductor. Similar leaderless orchestras have been organized in Kiev, Odessa and other centres. This movement has found an echo in New York, where a leaderless orchestra, patterned on the Russian model, was organized a few years ago.

The usual type of orchestra, directed by a conductor, flourishes throughout the country. In Leningrad, the former imperial court orchestra has been reorganized into the Academic Philharmonic Society. In Moscow

symphonic concerts are given by the orchestra of the Bolshoi Theatre, which is generally considered on a par with the best Western European ensembles. Large choruses have also been developed in centres like Leningrad, Kiev and Tiflis; while string quartets have reached a high state of excellence, as exemplified by the Glazunov, Stradivarius and Moscow State Conservatory quartets. The Ukraine and other autonomous Republics also have their string quartets.

POPULARIZATION OF MUSIC

With the outbreak of the October Revolution, the masses of workers, Red Army soldiers and youth flocked to the concert halls. Music was played by individual artists and orchestras in the workers' clubs, the theatres, the soldiers' barracks, and even railway stations. As in all the other arts, the Soviet authorities sought not merely to entertain the masses, but to raise their cultural level. Often concerts were accompanied by lecturers who explained the music, giving its history, meaning, and structure. The new audiences listened to the pre-revolutionary music which was often strange and unintelligible to them; but soon they became accustomed to music as a part of their lives, and began to demand a simplification of the programs. The Russian musicians, coöperating with the Commissariat of Education, selected such works as were easily intelligible to workers. Prior to the Revolution the worker audiences had been accustomed to street songs, dance music and the vulgar ditties of dilettantes catering to the worst taste. The problem now has been how to bring the music created by great artists for select circles to the wide masses of workers. Systematic courses in listening to music are

being conducted in workers' clubs; concerts begin with the simpler classics and are carried on to more complex music, each aspect of the performance being explained. Collections of songs, classical and popular, are published for general circulation. Brass bands, *balalaika* groups and symphonic orchestras are organized at workers' clubs, as well as choruses trained in repertoires of good music. Improvements are made in popular musical instruments, such as the *balalaika* and the accordion, and every effort is made to encourage everyone to play some instrument. Often the Young Communist League organizes accordion-playing contests to which come thousands of players from among the workers and peasants. These concerts are attended by immense audiences. Simultaneously the conservatories and musical schools supply performers and lecturers to the workers' clubs as well as music teachers who train the choruses and orchestras.

This is part of the Soviet régime's general policy of making all the arts an integral part of the life of the workers and peasants. Just as there are thousands of worker and peasant theatrical groups, so there are thousands of musical circles in the workers' clubs and village organizations. By 1925, for example, there were in the Soviet Union more than 3,500 workers' clubs with over 6,000 musical groups and choruses, out of a total of 25,000 club groups specializing in the various arts. In addition, there were about 2,000 musical circles connected with smaller organizations known as Red Corners. Prior to 1925 there were more than 14,000 workers who actively participated in these musical groups. By 1926 the number increased to 16,000, out of a total of 700,000 workers' club members. Altogether, about forty-five percent of the total membership of

workers' clubs throughout the Soviet Union participate in artistic groups. A remarkable feature of this rapid growth is that 'it proceeded under the most unfavorable circumstances. Musical circles sprang up all over the Soviet Union amidst famine, disease, civil war and blockade. Often artistic activities were carried on between pitched battles, and musical groups made their headquarters in unheated clubrooms and empty barns. During the critical years 1918 and 1919, a series of concerts were given in the railway yards of Odessa, attended by such immense crowds of workers that it was feared the enclosures would give way under the pressure. The programs included selections from composers like Borodine and from the operatic classics. The organization of musical circles was impeded by the civil wars, but with the coming of peace they went on unabated. In 1921 the Proletcult movement, which was so active in the field of workers' literature, painting, theatre and cinema, also turned its attention to music for workers. Proletcult began to organize musical studios throughout the country. Efforts were made to discover musical talent among the masses. Workers' clubs became the headquarters of music schools and the district Proletcult studios conducted conservatories for workers. Many leading Russian composers and performers assisted Proletcult in its diffusion of music among the masses. The leading Russian authorities on the theory and history of music coöperated with the Proletcult studios, lecturing at concerts to give the workers a musical background. There are at present eight Proletcult musical studios in Moscow alone, doing this kind of work.

Thousands of concert lectures have been given at the workers' clubs. The programs usually consist of Ger-

man and Russian classics, as well as Russian folk songs. The lectures deal with such subjects as acoustics, the history of music and the relation between music and social evolution. As early as 1921-22, string quartets performed chamber music at various workers' clubs. In 1924-25 special courses were organized by the Moscow Trade Union Council for training musical leaders in the workers' clubs. This work has been expanding and improving, the level of instruction being raised from year to year. Since 1925 there has been a steady process of amalgamation of musical circles in workers' clubs. Many circles merged into associations covering entire districts, as for example, the Clothing Workers' Central Chorus, the Communal Workers' Chorus, The Food Workers' Chorus, and choruses made up of members of the Metal Workers' Union, the Textile Workers' Union and so on. Many of these unions contribute their best players to joint orchestras and choruses. The policy of developing the artistic gifts of the workers, without detaching them from their trades, has proven successful. Some of the workers' clubs are no longer content with folk songs, and have produced operas in which their own musical groups take all the parts. More recently concerts of professional musicians at workers' clubs have been systematized and extended. String quartets and symphony orchestras from the large cities tour the provinces, playing before audiences of coal miners, metal workers, and lumberjacks. Part of this mass musical activity includes musical correspondents, equivalent to worker and peasant correspondents in other fields, who report to the newspapers on the musical activities in their region.

An example of how the Soviet régime popularizes music among the workers and peasants may be found in

the program worked out for the winter of 1928-29. The chief aim of the program was to arrange concerts on a definite plan. The direction of concerts was concentrated in a single body, The *Glaviskustvo* or The Chief Art Department, a section of the Commissariat of Education, which has charge of all artistic activities in the Soviet Union.

Glaviskustvo's first step was to improve radio broadcasting, giving the Russian public a better and wider selection of musical programs, varying these selections to suit different groups, tastes and ages. The radio musical programs were more definitely made part of the general educational program of the Soviet Union. Open air radio concerts for workers were extended. In general, all concerts for workers were reorganized, being placed under the direction of three leading Soviet musical institutions, the Soviet Philharmony, the cultural section of the Moscow Trade Unions, and the leaderless orchestra, *Persimfans*. In addition to the usual concerts in the towns and cities, in which the best artists of the country participate, the Soviet Philharmony has arranged concerts in suburbs, Red Army barracks, and areas where large numbers of factory workers reside. For this purpose some of the best orchestras in the country have been used, such as the new Red Army orchestra organized in 1928 and the orchestra of the cinema theatre *Colossus*. Special training for this purpose was also given to the amateur Trade Union orchestras, such as the orchestra of the Educational Workers' Union and the Union of Government and Commercial Employees.

Another innovation in Soviet musical life has been the organization of musical evenings at the workers' clubs each evening being dedicated to some special subject.

The concerts usually concentrate on some composer whose works are played by the orchestra and explained by a lecturer. Similar programs are arranged for workers' matinées on Sundays.

The Soviet authorities boast that they have made the first attempt in the world to organize all musical activity under a definite and harmonious plan, coördinating all its aspects toward educating an entire people in the art of music. Thus, they point out, the gulf which formerly existed between professional musicians and the people is rapidly disappearing. During the past year workers' orchestras have given excellent concerts of Beethoven and Schubert as well as other classical composers. Workers' clubs have produced entire operas without using professional singers, musicians or stage designers, the Metal Workers' Union of Dnieperopetrovsk, for example, has developed an orchestra which in 1928 played Beethoven's First and Ninth symphonies unabridged. This Trade Union has an excellent chorus of 250 workers. Its concerts are accompanied by posters carrying slogans which indicate the connection between music and general culture. Thus one poster declared: "By the production of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* we acquire the benefits of culture." Other posters carried Beethoven's portrait and scenes from his life. Such events have encouraged Soviet leaders to say, "Music is now as indispensable a part of our social life as bread."

RADIO BROADCASTING

Among the factors which have made it possible to popularize good music has been the radio, which was organized in the Soviet Union in 1924. In that year there was only one broadcasting station in Moscow,

which operated irregularly. By 1928, after four years, there were more than forty broadcasting stations throughout the country. Plans are under way for constructing new stations in Siberia and Central Asia, establishing a complete network of radio broadcasting for the entire country.

Radio programs, broadcast from such centres as Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov and Tiflis, are organized so as to appeal to various audiences: workers in the factories or clubs, peasants on their farms, intellectuals in the civil service or engaged in cultural work in the provinces and villages.

Radio programs usually include reports on current political questions and economic construction; lectures on the natural sciences, agriculture, engineering, medicine, hygiene; literary readings and recitations, and musical concerts. The radio is also used extensively for broadcasting news. This service is organized by classes and groups, constituting a series of special verbal newspapers, such as the Workers' *Pravda*, the Peasants' *Pravda*, the Young Communists' *Pravda*, the Radio Pioneer, etc. The contents of the news reports is the same for all audiences, but the form varies, usually assuming conversational form. Between news reports the stations broadcast musical numbers.

The reports on political and economic questions are often made over the radio by outstanding political leaders and heads of government departments; while the literary readings and recitations and the musical numbers are done by the best artistic units of the country. Recent developments have made it possible for radio fans to listen in on operas, theatrical performances, concerts and lectures in any of the large cities in their region.

There are about 230,000 receiving sets of various kinds

in the Soviet Union. This is a small number for so vast a country. However, life in that country is to a large extent on a collective basis. These receiving sets are nearly all located in workers' and peasants' clubs, reading halls, Trade Union headquarters, and often even in the street. Every loud-speaker serves many workers and peasants at the same time. Such audiences range from 50 to 2,000. This collective listening-in has developed mass criticism of radio programs, and the broadcasting stations have been responsive to this criticism.

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